



We are back! Another week another Beat. This week we have the remaining writings from 11.26 (if they didn't make it in last week's issue) and most if not all the 11.27 writings! So brace yourself readers there is so much information and art covered in the next 60, 70, 80 pages, we can only hope you grab it and use it to better and to support your life and the positive road you are striving to go down. Well, we hope all of you are well? We are doing fine. We had a very enjoyable weekend, the sun is out (still out), it's warm (even in the city), the BBQ chicken and ribs have been so damn tasty, chilling with our family and friends and enjoying our lives. Beautiful and fulfilling!

This week's ed note is written by our ol' friend Pauline Craig who has about another thousand plus words to say! Good for her. If you recall from our last issue/editorial note we have a Beat first, we actually had to continue the editorial note from issue 11.25. Well, well, well... here we are this week to wrap up Pauline's thoughts and views from what she reads and sees thanks to the interactions she has with you Beat writers. For your information Pauline has been conducting writing workshops for a number of years now. Today she co-facilitates workshops in Marin, SF/YGC and LCRS. Besides facilitating, she types, she edits and does her part to help bring in the money. We are forever grateful for the love and dedication Pauline gives to the publication! Okay Pauline, take it away...

Another major problem affecting many of our Beat Within writers and artists in juvies around the Bay Area is that their families and/or they have entered the USA illegally, most often from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, especially Mexico, and are getting arrested, which effectively ends their public educations. And many of our Beat workshops, especially in Marin County, include kids who are facing deportation. Two and a half years ago Marin County Juvenile Hall competed with other juvies nationwide and won a federal Homeland Security contract to accept any youth who are in the country illegally and have been arrested somewhere in the US—Boston, Arizona, Georgia, wherever—and house them until they go to their deportation hearings in immigration court in San Francisco.

Many youth in our Beat workshops describe in our topic discussions and writings how, now that they are arrested, they are in big trouble. Jose, in Marin County juvy, a sixteen-year-old from a small city near Guadalajara, described in an essay how he still owes his "coyote," the smuggler who snuck him over the border into the US, thousands of US dollars, and that the coyote told him he knew the house in his hometown where his parents live and threatened to harm or kill them, if he couldn't work (under the table) and pay him the remainder of his debt.

Jose's worries for his family and himself are echoed by many young men in juvy who say they can't pay the money they owe their coyotes, because they are incarcerated and can no longer work. And no one supervising the teens in Marin juvy knows what happens to these kids when they are forcibly returned to their homelands. If the kids have family, they may be lucky, but according to a Marin County juvy supervisor, if they have no family "back home," they are turned over to the local authorities. What happens to a boy sent back to Guatemala, who has gotten in trouble in the US, when the Guatemala City police get jurisdiction over him? Do US Homeland Security agents track these kids, and if so, with what consequences? Do the agents intervene and help him/her if there's a problem with the local police? Or do these forcibly returned youth just become "desaparecidos" (the disappeared)?

Juan, a fifteen-year-old who has been caught up for eight months San Francisco's YGC, can't write or read Spanish or English, but was learning to speak English in juvy before he was put in a van with other boys and returned to Tegucigalpa, in his "home state" of Honduras, even though he had committed no other crime other than crossing the Mexican/US border illegally. He was deported because he has no family in the US to accept responsibility for or sponsor him. Two young men—Flaco and Lil' Loco from Mexico, in the SF/YGC unit with Juan, are also undocumented, but are not facing deportation because they have family here.

Seventeen-year-old Dean, originally from Jamaica, lived with his mother in Florida before he was arrested. He has been incarcerated for a year and a half in Marin juvy, and has been fighting deportation in court all this time, because, he maintains, enemy gangs would murder him, should he be forced to go back to "home." Many Marin juvy staff, having heard his story in court, are convinced he may be right.

Part of the anti-illegal immigrant legislation now wending through the legislative processes in the US House of Representatives and the Senate is engineered by US citizens who say they resent that the children of the undocumented in this country are allowed to attend public schools financed by the tax dollars of US citizens, monies they say should go only to educate their own children. However, now many Americans who have no children of their own must surrender their tax dollars to be spent for the public education of their neighbors', everybody else's, kids? They have no choice—that's the law. So what's up with not extending the same privilege of a free public education to youths without citizenship? Shouldn't all youngsters in America be "our kids"? Throwing any youths who are in the US illegally out of school will not only truncate their educations, it will shove even more obstacles at them as they struggle to adjust to the US, and set them up to be tempted to resort to whatever illegal activity, just to survive.

What will happen to the youth who are now up in juvenile halls around the country? Some may be troubled, abused, confused, frightened and/or very angry. Some may feel hopeless, resentful, even hateful toward a society, including a school system, that seems to scorn them, neglect them, ignore them. But many of these same students are among the most brilliant, tender, insightful, quick to learn, eager to understand, curious, patient, trusting, talented, inspired kids we have in this country, and they need and deserve a school system that nourishes them and offers them an excellent education, so, regardless of the crimes they've committed; what their national origin, color, or ethnic background is; or whether they're in the US legally or not, they all can have a chance to discover for themselves what they're capable of accomplishing in this country.

Some watching the educational process in the US evolve, wonder whether those who run the Departments of Education throughout the country really want everybody's kids educated. Or are they deliberately creating an educational system designed to perpetuate a permanent underclass of uneducated or undereducated young adults

whom they intend to become increasingly more controllable, pliable, easily manipulated, desperate, probably poor, people they can exploit for cheap labor, the military, whatever, to keep them ignorant and dependent for their survival upon corporate or governmental systems? Are the distinctions between those who get kicked out of school and/or discouraged from seeking an education, and those who are privileged and helped to succeed throughout their higher education, based on students' color, nationality, religion, or ethnic origin, and essentially racist? Classist? Elitist? Who benefits when the prisons are filled with men and women who were once in juvy, whom society, including the school systems, ignored, betrayed, failed?

Nobody need ask what color or nationality Dominic is, about his legal status, nor the nature of his crime, now when he walks across the stage of Marin juvy, grinning in his maroon cap and gown, flourishing his high school diploma, a paper he had never before seriously considered himself capable of earning, before he was sent to juvy. And none should. But even Dominic, proud with his diploma, dreads that he will have no choice, when he's released later this month, but to find another home in a dumpster.

As members of the Bay Area community and as tax payers, our mission must be is to do whatever to enable youth in juvies to reaffirm their faith in themselves and to demand that their public school administrators keep their students in school and provide the crucial information and experience they'll need as a bulwark to go on and achieve their own goals and dreams, hopefully within the legitimate working world. It's sad and tragic that for so many "on the inside," it is the education they get in juvenile hall, as paltry as it may be, that may provide them the only or last formal learning they may ever again experience. Whose fault is that?

Wow, Pauline, thank you for opening our eyes and sharing your views with us readers. We are sure many of our readers will learn, support and/or challenge the commentary you present this week. We shall see...

The topics addressed in our workshops prior to the magnificent writings featured in this issue were (from issue 11.26), "That Lie" - Sadly we have all been told lies, from those close to us, like our love ones, to those not so close, like those in government or the history books we have read in school. Many lies, for better or worse, have affected our choices and the paths we are on. This week we want you to write about the lies that have affected you in your young life. Be as specific as you can.

Our second topic, "How Do You Determine A Real Smile From One That Is Fake?" - We're pretty sure that you all were warned one way or another to keep an open eye for those who will smile in your face then stab you in the back when you least expect it. We've also had the experience of distrusting someone, later to learn that they were solid! With that in mind we are trying to figure out how do you read in between the lines of a smile coming from a total stranger, or a smile coming from a person who you "Feel" or "Know"? What do you look for to determine a smile that is sincerely from the heart? Can you tell us of a time when you trusted someone's smile that you should not have, or where you distrusted someone's smile that you should have trusted?

Our third topic, "Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy" -What does going dumb, stupid, or hyphy mean to you? Is it a feeling or a way of life? When have you gone dumb, stupid, or hyphy? Has going dumb, stupid, or hyphy ever gotten you in trouble? What do you have to say to people who don't understand, or think that going dumb, stupid, or hyphy is ridiculous? Let us know what your thoughts are on this Bay movement, and as always, keep it Beat appropriate.

For issue 11.27 the topics were "What Is The Worst Crime A Person Can Commit?" - You can go to jail for so many things, some serious, others not. So, in your opinion, what is the worst crime a person can commit? Is it the murder of another human being? Child molestation? Rape? Assault? Could it be selling drugs and contributing to the demise of another human being or of an entire community? How about seeing someone in need of assistance but choosing to ignore them? Or could be it something like stealing money from your mother, neglecting your siblings, or letting your own life go down the tubes? Why do you think the crime you have chosen is the worst crime? What do you think the punishment for this crime should be? What do you think drives a person to commit such a crime? Do you believe that a person who commits this crime could ever be forgiven for what he or she did? What would you say if someone in your own family committed this crime? Let The Beat know what the worst crime is, and what makes you feel that way.

Our second topic, "What Do You Think Happens When You Die?" Many cultures, religions and individuals have different ways of viewing death. Hindus and Buddhists believe that how you act in this life will determine who or what you are in the next life (reincarnation); Christians and Jews believe if you are good you go to heaven and if you are bad you end up in hell; and some cultures even believe you can bring people back from the dead (voodoo). There are folks who think that once you die that's it - you're in a box in the ground forever (or burned to ashes, and nothing more). Is there an afterlife, or not. What determines where you will spend eternity? What will happen to you when you die?

Last but not least, "When Have You Felt It Was Okay To Cry?" - Sometimes things happen to us in life that make us want to cry tears of joy or tears of sadness. But many of us — especially boys — learn that crying is a sign of weakness, so we aren't comfortable letting others see us cry. What we want to know is when have felt completely comfortable to express what you were feeling with tears — either tears of joy or tears of pain? Describe what it was the made you feel so strongly. What was it that moved you? Who was around you? How did they react? Were you by yourself? Did crying make you feel better about the situation? Worse? What or who made you feel comfortable about shedding tears?

With all that said, lets close this ed note with our praise and admiration for this week's onslaught of POW(erful) writings aka Pieces Of The Week. Check out the POW winners... From the 150 Crew, Diego, Baby Lou, Y's Lady, Tea Etta, and Big Vic. From SF/YGC, Ryda-T, Lil' D-G, Rebel, Mark, TeShawn, and Meen. From Walden House PSK, Swg, Clover, Tg, and B-Eye. From Marin we have two from Dominic and From Santa Cruz we have Brenda.

OK, this issue goes out to Pauline Craig for dropping heat in this editorial note and for her overall love she shares for The Beat Within. Thank you colleague!

Best to you all, see you next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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I'm Okay

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Crew Counselor



Norteño/Sureño Conflict

-J. Alvarez, M.A., GCII, 150 Crew Counselor

A New World Order

I don't know if anyone accused of anything should be locked up. In a tribe in Africa, when someone steals, for example, they would announce to the whole village to come and they'd make a huge circle with the accused in the middle. Everyone in the circle would say something good about that person. It could be anything, just good.

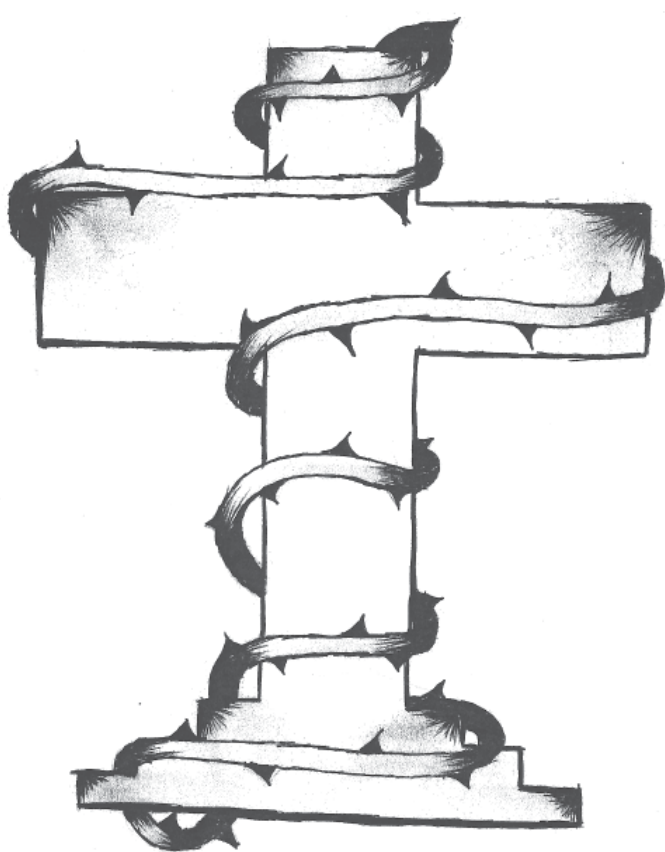
Anyway everyone stands there saying good things to the accused for 3-4 days, something like that, day and night, until (let's say) the 5th day; they have a huge feast for everyone in the village, and they welcome the person back in to their community.

In another village if someone murders someone, they are taken to the murdered person's family, who are instructed to take care of the murderer while in the mourning. The murderer lives with them as well. After the mourning period, the person is taken to a river/ lake/ whatever, tied up and thrown over. Only a family member of the murdered can save him.

These examples just go to show that killing and locking folks up doesn't do shhh. How many people know that you go to jail for a crime? How many people commit crimes every sec? Showing people who they really are and who they can be does something. Of course, in order to start this, we'd have to destroy the world and enact a new world order. So all I have to say is peace.

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is one of the most thoughtful and informative pieces we've ever read in The Beat. We often read the tired old expression, "Do the crime, do the time," but we wonder why "time" has to be the answer to crime. What you have done is provide some real possibilities for other ways to look at crime and our response to it. If reducing crime is the object of our criminal justice system, then it is one of the most monumental failures in this society. It's long past time that we begin looking at other models, and we thank you for providing just two of the many ways other society's have of dealing with their crime problem.



When I Die

When I die
There will be silence
No more drugs
And no more violence

When I die
There won't be
No more secrets
And no more lies

When I die
My family will cry
And for my homies
Spark a blunt up
And get high

So you won't feel pain
And I don't watch your eyes
rain

When I die
I will see will see
My older homies
Phino and Chino

-Ryda-T B4, SF/YGC
From The Beat: We think the first stanza alone of this painful yet beautiful poem deserves the designation POW. The rhyming of silence with violence is the kind of remarkable choice of words that mark true poets. No one should allow himself to get locked up, but most certainly no one with the soul of a poet should be anything but free!

That One Lie

All my life people made me believe
if I have no faith, it's all because of me.
So I blame myself and I try to escape
into a world where my mind screams rape.
I enjoy it so much and they ask me why.
I say it's not me. I say it's the world wants to die.
So I do it my own way and it muffles the cry.
If you ask the right questions, they toss you a lie.
The lies turn to laws that no man can enforce
until you're caught in the middle of a life of divorce -
from your family, your friend, from life outside the walls.
But I was thrown in that position. I just answered the calls,
calls from the people who needed help like me,
calls from the people caught in the lie.

-Brendan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Powerful poem Brendan. So, you've discovered, somewhat painfully, an inappropriate response to the lie. Progress depends on mistakes, in science, and in life. The important thing is not to repeat the responses that don't work. We look forward to more of your work. And if you're fortunate enough to be out soon, we urge you to write to The Beat Without. You're a talented fellow.

I was thrown in that position. I just answered the calls,
calls from the people who needed help like me,
calls from the people caught in the lie.

That Lie

The one that change my life,
it is the lie I cannot forget
because it is the one I did not want to hear.
I was told, I will see you tomorrow, and he did not stay true
because he did not make it to see me the next day.
He said we will go to the movies but it never happened.
He said he will see me graduate and see me cross the stage
but he did not make it that far.
I told him I will go to college for him so I can show him I can
do better. I told him I will get a good job so he does not have
to work anymore.
I said I will be the best son and friend in the world
if he can just be mine again.
This lie changed my life forever.
If he could have just said goodbye it might have been
different.

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry your dad didn't get to keep his promises because of whatever happened to him. Do you think that despite all of the pain it's caused you, you might still follow through with your own promises of going to college and working hard?

What's In My Blood

Y'all really want to know what's in my blood? Ancient Christian empire ruled by royal emperors. Haile Selassie, Emperor Meketek the Third, they run in my blood! Over eighty different languages and dialects are spoken in the land of the Abyssinians. Over three hundred alphabets are used in just one language I speak. The Lion of Judah runs through my curly hair and dark skin. East Africa Axum, the old nation I'm steady embarrassing through are trials and tribulations I stay maintaining.

-Rebel The M-Blocker B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have seldom had a piece like this in The Beat — a real (though brief) historical link to who you are. We are old enough to remember Haile Selassie, the Lion of Judah, so we know what you mean when you say you are embarrassing the great values of that empire by allowing yourself to be enslaved by this one. You have the knowledge; now use it in a way that would make your royal ancestors proud!

The Lion of Judah runs through my curly hair
and dark skin.

These Emotions

My emotions run high, my anger runs deep
I can't stop thinking about how you violated me
You took my life from me, I felt used and abused
I wish you were in my shoes to see what I go through
My mind is gone, I can't explain how I feel
I want to forgive you but the memories are real
I just want to know why it had to be me
You should have left me alone and just let me be me
You had to feel in control of something
You're the reason I cry
Why is it that we have to experience such hated crimes
No matter where life takes me
I'm a survivor and I'm strong
And I remind myself everyday
It's not my fault and that it was you who was wrong.

-Tea Etta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is really sorrowful piece. We're so glad you're writing about your experience and hope that it gives you some release—you write well. When something of this weight happens at such a young age, it's important to allow lots of time to heal, and just know that no matter how dark things are, someday things will begin to feel a little better.

How I See It

I began to realize
That I should've analyzed
All of my surroundings
Then maybe I would have on my own things
And not be wearing county property
When there's so many families suffering from poverty
But the government pays for me to remain here
When the little children are starving far and near
And yet Governor focuses on keeping all of us
minorities
Locked up away from civilization is his top priority
That and closing down schools
And calling us fools
With no education
But the system has a huge lack of communication
And we fail to realize
That they're making us take each other's lives.

-Y's Lady, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is truly off the hook! It's so refreshing to hear someone connecting their own situation to the things that are going on everywhere, and the politics that make it all possible. And to do it all in such a short poem is really difficult. Really nice work! We hope this is just the beginning as not just a writer but a teacher who is able to see the bigger picture.

Through My Eyes

Every day passes, reminding me of lessons to be learned. While I am in here, opportunities pass me by, showing me that life is not a game. I can only guess what life is meant to be based on what I hear and see today.

I learned of love and the pain that it may bear. You can never know a person's truth behind the masks they wear. I do not know the meaning of love. I'm unsure of a lot of things these days. I feel like I know less than I thought.

I know now I find it getting difficult to distinguish good from bad, although it sounds like I'm a child, misunderstood, I need to move on past the hurt. I need to move to heaven from this hell, you feel me?

I need to stand up to others and to myself as well. I don't know how to tell a good friend from a bad one. We talk behind each other's backs, ruining the trust we had. When I look in the mirror I see things I wish I could deny: A fear of judgment and confrontation.

I can no longer look people in the eye because of it.

-Baby Lou, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is the most ruthlessly honest piece you've ever written for The Beat, and we know that you felt lost when you wrote it, but the truth is that sometimes when we feel the most lost is when we're the closest to being found. The stuff you write about, that day of reckoning, when you look deeply inside yourself and realize that what you thought was true was not true — that is the bravest thing you could ever do. You know how many people have the courage to ask themselves the hard questions? Not very many. It takes a rare strength to do it. You say you don't know how to tell a good friend from a bad one... but is that true. Maybe you've never asked yourself that question before. Now that you're asking it, you tell us. What does it take to be a good friend?

When I look in the mirror I see
things I wish I could deny: A fear of
judgment and confrontation.

It Lives In Me

I hustle, I eat, I bang these streets
Succeed what defeats and stay on my feet
I'm a product on these streets
Built to last on my feet seven days of the week
My name ain't D-Grinda for nothing
I stands for something
I cry, I lie, break rules, but why?
It lives in me, thinks fo' me
When I don't want to think, homie
I rather keep my eyes open 'cause I don't wanna blink,
homie
I decide on lives, get high to rise
Above the gun smoke that fills my eyes
My moms can quote, she feels provoked
But can't do shhh but hope
It lives in me, thinks for me
When I don't want to think homie.
I rather keep my eyes open
'Cause that can be your last blink, homie.

-Lil' D-G B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The problem is you can't keep your eyes open every minute of every day. The energy it takes to live the way you do prevents you from developing your great brain power to its full potential, so while we understand why you do what you do where you do it, it's our hope that you find both a less dangerous place to spend your time, as well as a more productive place for your mind (like college)!

Pass Or Fail

On June 15, 2006, I AWOLed from my placement. The first thing that happened to me was I ran into a dope dealer. I've been clean and sober for almost 11 months, and after he offered it to me, I didn't know what to do. I thought I was free when I ran out that door, not knowing I was going to be facing a pass-or-fail test.

I didn't know I was going to have to think about my life. After he asked me, I thought a lot about what I was going to lose. And it was a lot. I had to ask myself if smoking meth was worth it, but it wasn't.

I said "no" and really, now that I think about it, I'm proud that I didn't relapse. Eventually, I returned to my placement and passed that test that God put out for me. I'm grateful that I still have my sobriety. I passed the test, and now it's time to continue on with my life.

-Clover, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This story ends on such a positive note... but it might not have. By running from your placement, you risked so much that you hadn't given any thought to. That you were able to do what you knew was the right thing to do is a wonderful thing, and you deserve to be proud of yourself. But not everyone would have been able to handle that situation with so much maturity, so all of us must consider possible consequences all the time. If we go ahead and do whatever it is, we must be prepared to accept those consequences. You weren't prepared to accept the consequences, so you didn't go ahead and do it. Congratulations!

I thought I was free when I ran out that door, not knowing I was going to be facing a pass-or-fail test.

What Happens After Death

What happens after people die
I can't answer that 'cause I'm still alive
Many people think your soul will rise
up to the heavens high and high
What I think happens is kind of mad
but try your best to understand
First things first you close your eyes
forced to confront everything you hide
Then you learn of all your wrong
that you hear from a unwritten song
The world around starts spinning in a craze
And then you're dropped in a maze
Watch your step and watch your choices
You notice a lot if distant calling voices
Turn after turn there's no escape
It's deep inside you best not wait
At the end you're greeted by a angel
but you cannot call her a stranger
She grabs you and gives you a kiss
Welcome to after life's eternal bliss
Maybe you don't get it now
and you will still ask how
Just think about the things I said
Maybe dying is just in your head
Maybe life really has no end
Just a series of turns and bends

-Mark B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This poem blew us away for its originality of thought and of rhyme. Does everyone get that kiss of eternal bliss, or just certain people? Did you write this tight poem in the workshop, or did you spend more time than that writing it? With the poetic skills you bring to your writing, we'd love to see what you could do in prose (not poetry) with this same theme.

Why I Write

I evoke emotions that enclose life-altering events
A type of gut-clenching power that only corpses bring
Describing in vivid detail the power behind fear
The motive behind murder, the helplessness of the murdered

I can put you in a dark alley way and make you hear voices
It's the middle of the night and a little girl's laugh echoes softly

A finger traces a line down your spine, but when you look--
no one

I can bring tears to your eyes and make your throat swell
Whether in sadness, fear, happiness or anger, if I wanted
I can even make you arch your back and heat your thighs

I can control your everything just by writing
I can make you painfully aware of life's problems
Or relieve you from all stress whatsoever

I can put mental images in your brain

As long as you keep looking

The mind is a very powerful organ

To gain control of it is a very powerful talent that many have
But don't know it

I write to envelop the reader in a subconscious state
To take him in my grasp and control him like a puppet

Kind of like God and faith in religion

You put faith in writing that you will be released from reality

I read and write the way some people take drugs

It is a numbing mechanism and I thrive in it

It is sort of an orgasmic feeling when I put pen to paper
Directing one's mind, I can make suspense like the throes of orgasms

Or make the text informative, but not quite boring

I am a writer

Cunning, baffling, powerful

Alcoholics Anonymous says the same about alcohol for addicts

Humans are addicts for reading

That's why I write

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Amazing poem. You are acutely aware of the power you've already created in your wonderful poems, raps, short stories, essays. Do you also feel any responsibility to guide your Beat readers in any way—to keep their imaginations safe? Or do you feel that through writing it's fair to create an imaginative free-for-all—read this if you dare—and that it's essentially the reader's responsibility to open or protect his/ her psyche to your images and ideas? Do you just "let go" and let stories in your imagination write themselves through you? What responses to your work have you already had, from The Beat Within? Please let us know!



What About The Kid?

What about the kid you have at home?
 What about the girl you have at home
 Who you watched give birth to your first kid?
 What about all the time you were there
 When he was just a baby?
 Now time is passing by
 Now you decided to come back to reality
 So now you're at Log Cabin
 Tryin' to do your best
 Tryin' to do seven months and nothin' else
 Suddenly you realize
 So what about your baby boy?
 He about to be one
 Aren't you mad you couldn't see him turn one?
 Now you lookin' at gettin' out in October
 Day by day
 Your kid's gettin' older
 What about the father you never had?
 What about your father?
 Was he there?
 Did he ever show you he cared?
 So what about Christmas?
 Are you gonna be there?
 So what about the kid you have
 Are you gonna give him all the things you never had?
 So what is love?
 When you just get it from your mother?
 And what is a man
 When you have no one to show you how to be a man?
 Now you layin' in bed
 And he's wonderin'
 Where is his dad?
 And his mom's tellin' him
 "You never had a dad?"
 So now, when you get older
 You're just gonna be mad
 So what are you gonna say?
 When you have a son?
 Are you gonna teach him to be a man?
 So teach your son now to be a man

-Te Shawn LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Brilliant poem. Do you think that boys who grow up without fathers tend to neglect any kids they may father, like their fathers did them? Or do you think boys without fathers become terrific fathers when they have children, because they already know how lonely, scary and confusing it is to grow up without one? Many young men seem to mess up, get busted and go to juvy just before or just after a child of theirs is born. Why do you think that is? Also many write about being a way better father than the father they never had, and we do hope that is the case. Fathers are important, period.



Dominant Writer

Dear Beat,

I haven't noticed it before, but I am an extremely dominant person. All my life I have been submissive and let everybody walk all over me—now it's my turn. I do this by writing. In my poem, "Why I Write," I explain in detail the idea I've just expressed. My call in life is to write. That way I can control my dominant nature in a safe way, while getting paid! I've experienced all of the emotions in my poems first hand, along with thousands of others, but when you mix that with my creativity to write and my vocabulary, and the gross amount of books I've read, the effect is dazzling. So, all in all, I have found my calling. You, my wonderful reader, are taking part in a life-changing moment for me, documented by an eighteen-year-old felon with a pen. Isn't that amazing in itself? Well, I owe it all to you, Beat. Forever gracious, Dominic. I am a writer.

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: You are a writer, Dominic, with an amazingly versatile style that seems to surrender to whatever topic and/or ambience you're expressing. We hope you've kept copies of all your raps, poems, short stories, and essays. Which of them are your favorites? It seems like you also maneuver appropriately between being dominant or recessive, depending on the situation, so that's all good. Why don't you write an essay for The Beat about your sources of inspiration? Your readers should love it.

You, my wonderful reader, are taking part in a life-changing moment for me, documented by an eighteen-year-old felon with a pen. Isn't that amazing in itself?

Tears Of A Man

eyes of a snake
 never blink never cry
 until they see a loved one
 'bout to die
 some just get drunk and high
 to forget the pain
 but inside the tears
 are pouring like the rain
 too much of a man
 to shed them tears
 or are you just hiding that
 inside with your fears
 you're as much of a man
 to drink them beers
 so don't cry
 when you get them years
 now you got your mom at home
 she the one crying
 while your locked up
 your loved ones are dying
 i spit real shit i ain't lying
 so are you a real man
 'cause you can rob cars and vans
 'cause you show no remorse
 you headed down
 the wrong course
 i can shed tears of a man
 i ain't gone hide it
 i'm here where i stand

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeow, wow! Yeah, you spit the real, with truth so powerful it could kill a fake's phony façade, shake a junkie out of his nod, wake the spiritually dead and bring them to light, watch them feel pride or fright, as tears drop like diamonds in the moonlight, and a man waits for a new day's sun to shine bright — take your stand just as you say, and as the sun rises before your eyes, you'll see the dawning of a new day, the reality of living a new way.

Lost Contact

Mom, your contact with me stopped
 Silence
 Nothing
 Not a call, not a letter, not ever a simple message
 See, I think to myself and think my love for you has gotten
 lesser and lesser
 'Cause see, you have gotten lesser and lesser
 I sit here watching my arms bleed while I write this poem
 I hope that it gets to you, but I will never know
 But I never will, 'cause your contact stopped again
 Silence
 Nothing
 Not a call, not a letter, not ever a simple message
 You were my everything
 I cared for you, I got you the things you needed when you
 needed it
 But at the time I need you the most, you're nowhere to be
 found
 Lost
 A missing person
 So I go and such for you
 But come to find your locked up again
 And then again your contact with me stops
 Silence
 Nothing
 Not a call, not a letter, not even a simple message
 So I sit here watching my arms and legs bleed
 And I say to myself my words mean nothing
 My care and love for you is silence
 So silent
 Nothing

-B-Eye, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We know there isn't any comfort in these words, but it is so clear that as much as you have lost, your mother has lost even more. If your words mean nothing to her (and you don't know that), they mean a great deal to us. Don't stop speaking or writing them.

Judging People As Inferior Is The Worst Crime

I think the biggest crime there can be is when a group of people see themselves as superiors and treat everyone else like sacks of shhh, but they are mandatory to keep themselves alive. Basically I'm talking about the government.

Down with the government! They make rules for the people and then after that, they work their way around their own miserable laws and bite you in the ass. Did you know that after America conquered California from Mexico, they signed a "Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty" which said that they would respect the Latino culture and leave its people alone. Kind of a betrayal that they trying to kick us Latinos. I'm Salvadoran.

We must REBEL! Don't y'all see that they slowly getting rid of all the unwanted shhh. Blacks, Latinos, and even motorcycle people, white people! This is why we must learn what is happening and do something about it. For example, this dude got 25 to life because he already had two strikes and caught another strike. (This was yesterday, June 19). Guess what his third strike was. He took a his brother's driving test for him. That shhh is super messed up. This shhh happened yesterday!

You can't do shhh, I know that, but if you, me and 5,000 other people get together, then we could change some shhh. Just get out and learn. That's the main advantage they get over us 'cause they think we ignorant. While we shootin' at each other for respect, the government has been trying to make laws that make it a felony to be an illegal immigrant, if your found helping (giving a house) a illegal immigrant, or even if a church program gives them sanctuary or safety, it's a felony and they all go to prison.

Why we still being ignorant, fighting because the next man makes us look bad or because we don't like the way they is or some shhhh? Well, Beat guy, gotta go. Peace.

Viva la revolución!

-Meen B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, we love that you've described treating people as inferior as a crime. It may, indeed, be the worst crime, because every victimization, whether it's the government victimizing an entire people, or an individual victimizing another, it rests on a foundation of perceived superiority. And second, we want to applaud you for recognizing that only through organizing thousands (and then millions) of people with a common interest can you resist the government. Back in the 1960s, thousands and thousands of people took to the streets to protest our war in Vietnam. These days, thousands have taken to the streets to protest the immigration policy our House of Representatives has passed, the one that makes felons out of immigrants and those who help them alike. (It hasn't yet become law, because the Senate passed a different version, and they can't resolve their differences.) Some of us believe that the government should bring back the military draft (which was ended in the 1970s) because then middle-class young people would feel threatened, and that would send them back into the streets to protest! In the meantime, we hope you are able to get your peers to see that only in numbers is there strength, and that true resistance to oppressive government policies only happens through organizing.

if you, me and 5,000 other

people get together, then we

could change some shhh.

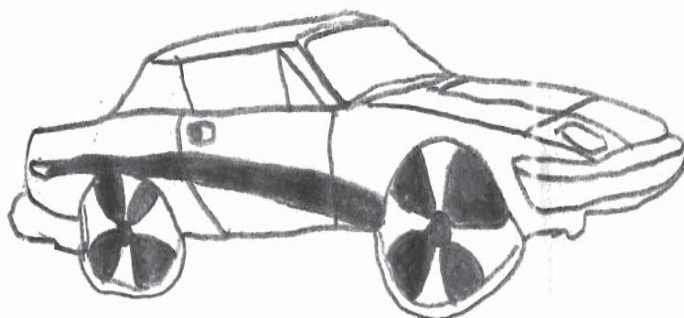
Things I've Learned

I first started poppin' pills four months ago. Every since, I haven't set them down. Thizzin' every day. I would do anything just to get some purple, white, yellow, red, blue pills. I didn't even realize what it was doing to my life. I got kicked outta my school. I lost some of my best friends. I lost the trust of my dad.

Brother, now I'm sitting here with a bunch of other girls at PSK counting down the days till I get to go home. I now know the effects that drugs have on my life and people that love me. I'm going to continue on with my life, this time without thizz. I hope you all realize the way drugs+ affect not only your life, but the lives of people that love you. Learn from your mistakes before it's too late.

-Tg, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You have honestly faced your addiction, learned the long-term consequences, and made an intelligent choice to continue to be sober. Never forget the lessons you learned here. Thank you for being honest, courageous and down for your own future.



CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Maintainin'

Time is tickin'
 Though my mind's gettin'
 Broader and thicker
 Of useful knowledge
 To maintain a sane way
 Though at times
 It's hard to contain myself
 Through life's mistrials an' tribulations
 All this hatred, neglectin' and harshin' discrimination
 Got my mind runnin' around
 Like a hyphy child
 While on the surface
 I'm presentin' a half way smile
 Not showin' the mental an' emotional part of me
 No need to, you see
 I'm a G
 Growin' on my own
 Even through misery
 Livin' day by day
 'Cause tomorrow isn't promised to me
 I learned it is not success I'm after
 In such times
 But to maintain an' survive
 Through the troubles
 Though I stumble
 I regain the strength arm
 Everything I obtained
 To literally not go insane

-Flaco LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Beautiful poem. It describes so beautifully how you have to withdraw when there's mess, chill, watch everyone, become circumspect or hide who you are until, especially in a place like detention. At the Ranch, at first, when you don't know most of the other guys, do you have to get to know who they are and what they mean by what they do? Then, do you feel like the real you can emerge, or do you still have to watch your back, what you say and do, who you trust? That must be like becoming paranoid. Is it the same confusion as to who people are, what their motive are, on the outs? If so, do you ever get to relax, have fun, be totally who you are, able to react based on how you really feel? If so, when?

Let Your Past Go

man play a big part in pride
 some men don't swallow they pride and cry
 real men go' swallow they pride when they life on the line
 when i think 'bout my past i let it go — tear by tear
 the best time to cry is when it is your time
 you always have to smile now and cry later
 let your past go by letting the tears flow
 and from that day on
 you're on a roll to get to your best goals
 men that don't cry, they play the role
 but first you smile 'cause you god's child
 you only gon' go through pain fo' a while
 god's comin' with things that's not gon' make you cry
 that's gon' make you fly high
 from all nonsense and things that don't make you cry
 so when you cry just know you a lot on yours
 and you letting out your past
 forget your pride — that could die
 just spread your wings an fly

-Mama's Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do some deep teaching about how a man cries tears to survive the pain he faces year after year, and when it's time to let the past go, it's time to let those tears flow. And God knows that tears cleanse the soul; so wash your sins by letting the tears begin. Then just as you say, spread your wings and fly away — not after you're dead, but the day you start living a brand new way 'cause you let God in your heart have His say.

The Worst Crime Is Racism

The worst crime a person can commit to me is racism
 When people minds ain't right and they turn to haterism
 That forms an invisible wall that separates me from you
 I was once told not to judge a book by it's cover
 'Cause I wouldn't know what it had to offer
 Where we going to end up if we all discriminate?
 Askin' myself why we all gotta hate?
 Why can't we have peace, for goodness sake?
 You ain't gotta live this way, 'cause this sure ain't your fate

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Racism can hurt so profoundly, especially if people reject you for the color of your skin, or your ethnic group, your sexuality. That means, that you don't have a chance with them—no matter who you are, how kind you are, how truly affectionate, funny, sincere, loyal you are to them, you're out! They feel their closed minds more than they feel you. How has racism worked in your life? Who has hurt you this way?

A Real Smile Or A Fake?

A real smile and a fake smile can look exactly the same. I remember the prettiest smile God ever blessed a pretty face with... This morning I looked in the mirror! That's a real smile.

The dude that left me here to rot... That's the smile of deceitfulness, treachery. The smile of a rat!

On the real though... My girlfriend's smile is a gift from the heavens... Smile of truth 'cause it's the smile I trust...

-Littles B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That real smile of yours shines through this piece, so forget the rat and concentrate on getting back to that smile of Truth — and not letting it get away from you again!

Why can't we have peace, for goodness sake?

Murder Is The Worst

I think the worst crime a person can commit is murder because when you kill someone you can't bring them back. If you punch someone in the eye you can always apologize, but when you kill someone, that's the end, and you take from the people that care about that person.

I know murder is the worst crime because my big brother was murdered and it devastated everyone that knew him. All the people wanted was to see his murderer end up behind bars or dead, and that's what people will wish upon you if you go out and murder someone.

So to everyone that lost someone close to you, you will know why murder is the worst crime a person can commit.

-Lil' Cal B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Lil' Cal, if you think murder is the worst crime someone can commit, what do you think about the death penalty? What if they caught your brother's killer and they sentenced him to be put to death. Do you think the state is right to kill that person? In other words, if murder is wrong and the worst crime, what do you think about the state taking life?

I know murder is the worst crime because
 my big brother was murdered and it
 devastated everyone that knew him.

Mothers Weep

the frigid air
is kinda nice
locked in despair
found in ice

with a scream
that has no tone
is a dream
I see alone

though it's vague
and never clear
I sense a plague
but find no fear

With no words
I share wisdom
newfound, worlds
stripped of freedom

destruction grows
as do weeds
but only shows
when mothers weep

-Mark B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even though you have some poetic references in this wonderful poem which we can't understand, we are truly impressed by your ability with words and thoughts. We would love to see what you could do with the themes you write about as essays, with full explanations. How long have you been writing? You're really good! Don't stop!

That Adrenaline Rush

My heart starts beating faster when I get an adrenaline rush. When I'm running from the cops, fighting, and stuff like that.

I remember a time I was with three homeboys in a stolen car, and some people we was racing gave us a lil' joint. Then we smoked it and my ninja started swerving the car side to side and running stop signs. My Chinese ninja wanted to drive, but everybody said no. so I said that he could drive.

He tried to copy my ninja that was swerving, but he didn't know how to drive. He was floorin' it, and moving the steerin' wheel as fast as he could, side to side. I told him to stop before he crashed, and next thing we knew we crashed into a parked Expedition and Honda Civic. The car we had and the Expedition were totaled.

Then we broke, but everybody was hurt. We heard sirens and we had to find somewhere to hide. We found a school and hid under some bushes just in time. We then moved to some other bushes and waited for an hour and a half. By the time we left the school, it was four in the morning. One of my ninjas broke his arm.

My heart started beating fast when I saw the cars comin' closer and closer to us as we crashed. The whole night I wasn't wearin' a seatbelt until I let my Chinese ninja drive. That seatbelt saved my life.

-Lazy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is an exciting story, and you tell it so well, which is why it's a co-pow. But we have to tell you, Lazy, that this is a story that leaves us scratching our heads at just how irresponsible some people can be! One thing we don't understand right off... after everybody said no to your Chinese homie who asked to drive, why did you say he could? When you allowed someone you knew could not drive (you put on your seatbelt), you were risking so much for so little! If y'all had killed someone else's child, how would you be feeling now, and for a long, long time? But even before you let him take the wheel, your friend was putting on a show that put at risk everyone who shared that highway with you. Why should innocent strangers be made to pay (with their lives sometimes, or the loss of their limbs) because a child behind the wheel of a dangerous machine thought it was a toy? And you without a seatbelt! Damn! Where do we begin?

Have A Plan

What up wit' the Beat? This you boy Dec in B4 not doing nothing just taking it one day at a time. It get hard in here calling my fam every day for five minutes, take a dump with three other people, eating some ok food.

But all a ninja can say is why I put myself in this position? Why I did not give a damn out there an' give a damn in here? Why you think positive in here? People here I see shining on.

I just do me. If it ain't good, tell me so yo' boy can try to fix it. All I am trying to say is don't put yourself in the position where you have to ask to take a crap. Just when you leave have a plan... or plan on returning, you dig.

-Dec B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We could have written this piece as a "From The Beat" response ourselves. You've said it all. Without making some real decisions to accomplish some things, and a plan to achieve them, you're allowing some else to plan for you to live in places like this, or worse, that you describe so well.

Trying To Go Home

I went to court and all my counts were dropped. So now I should be getting out. I want to go home when I get out 'cause I feel I have changed a lot by the things I say and do. If I don't get to go home I might have to go to a group home, somewhere I have never been to before.

I want to live with my moms when I get out. She stay in N.C. If I go out there I'm going to stay in school till I'm out. Then I want to take a trade in something I'm good at and like. I like taking pictures and driving cars. Also I like doing sounds for cars.

Well I hope I get out and I hope I don't ever come back to YGC.

-Qbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you get out too QBB. Remember what you said so you can do all the things you want to do. You never know, maybe one day you'll make a great car racer or a photographer, or both. Whatever happens, we wish you the best of luck, and thank you for all your many fine contributions to The Beat!

It Is Okay To Cry

The times I've felt it was ok to cry is when I think about my sister or someone else who died. When I cry, I don't think less of myself, not even when someone else cries.

If you cry for something that's not worth crying over — for example, spilt milk — then that's stupid, then I think less of you. If you cry to express your feeling or for something that been hurting you physically or mentally, then I don't think that no one should think less of you.

-E-Bezzzy B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why do you think boys are taught that it's weak to cry, even though every boy (and every girl, and every man, and every woman) cries as a human response to certain situations? If you had a son who was crying, would you tell him, "Don't be a cry baby," or "Don't cry like a little girl"? Those kinds of words stay in our minds long after we've grown into manhood.

... I'm going to stay in school till I'm out. Then I want to take a trade in something I'm good at and like.

The Lie

When my dad lies to me
It just breaks me down and weak
When my dad lies to me
It makes me want to hang in the street
When my dad lies to me
It's like I am burning heat
When my dad lies to me
It feel like he's treating me like I am cheap
When my dad lies to me,
I bet he feels like a creep.
When my dad lies to me
I wish he would burn in fire because he ain't nothing but a cold liar.

-Lil' Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your excellent poem gets to the heart of it, which is that when your dad lies, he hurts BOTH of you. That's the tragedy and loss. Keep writing your powerful thoughts and words.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Is Crying Okay?

Crying is okay
I do it each and every way
Mostly when I'm in jail
And feel like I'm on my way to hell
Sometimes I feel like crying only makes it worse
That's why I try to hold it in like money in my purse
But I know holding it in only makes everything build up inside
And that's what takes you on an emotional ride
That also makes you go crazy
And start crying like a little baby
Boys think that crying makes you look like a punk
That's exactly why when it comes to putting effort into a relationship they flunk
But that's on them because they be trying to look tough
And that's why their lives are beginning to get rough
But back to the question
Is crying okay?
Yea, all day, everyday.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice Piece! You speak about a few different aspects of the same issue, all in few words—which is one of a poet's tasks. The gender roles we all get stuck in can be really harmful, and though women suffer most visibly from sexist ideas and stereotypes, men do too. Not being allowed to cry and express oneself does mean holding it in, and like you said, that can drive you emotionally crazy. This is good work!

How I Feel Everyday Here In Jail

How I feel everyday here in jail.
I feel that this is not the place for me to be;
I need to be at home with my mother taking care of her.
I feel that being in jail makes me less than the person that I am.
And I know myself is better than that,
I know that I believe my self can do better,
that's why I hope I get to go home pretty soon.
And when I return home I'm going to change my life and the friends
I used to hang with,
I'm dropping them all to the curve.
And just keep doing what I was doing staying out of trouble and stay going to school and work.
Also I feel being here in jail
I just be thinking about lots of stuff and I know I let my family down
by coming to jail 'cause they always told me that they can't see me going to jail.
So when I came here
I just thought about family members and how I let them down.
So when I get out of here I'm never coming back 'cause I see this ain't the place for me.
I'm going to change not just for me,
but for my mother and the rest of my whole family.
That's all and that's how I feel about being here in jail.

-Romell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's great that you know who you are and that this isn't the life for you. There are so many options out there, and if you can hold on to your conviction and stay away from the temptations that will pull you in, you can enjoy a different kind of being—one that doesn't cause so much harm to your soul.

Tears Of A Clown

No one can ever see the pain of a clown
He's always crackin' jokes and smilin'
No one but the clown itself can only see
All the jokes is just compulsive lying
Lyin' to no one but itself, 'cause he can face the truth
Nothin' but pain clogged up in his heart

-Chex B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: They say that the best clowns — the best standup comics — dig deeply into their own pain to be able to laugh instead of cry. It is funny how a clown can hide so much pain behind a smile and a couple of jokes, in order to distract from the truth. Nice way of expressing your point.

That Lie

That lie, that lie. I done heard so many times my ninja telling me he's all mines. He tell me he love me and I think it true, but all along he playin' you. He got this other chick. He say she's making his dip. But I think he's giving her his chips. She's stacking the dough so they can get on and go do the damn thang, if you know what I mean.

That lie, that lie, that lie. So many times I was told something and kept it on my mind, but all my mom telling me she's coming home but never showed up, and left me home alone.

That lie, that lie. Why would you lie?

-Lil' Sexy GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If your boyfriend is lying to you to get what he wants, he sure wouldn't be the first man to do so! You already know you deserve better than that. We're interested in that last question. What do you think makes people lie?

when I came here

*I just thought about family members and how I let them down.
So when I get out of here I'm never coming back*

Y'all Ain't Right!

Dear Beat, I'm tired of reading someone else's pieces with my name on it. Shhh, I might as well say that 'cause it sure in the hell ain't what I'm writing. And every time I ask one of y'all before you leave the Hall what won't make it to The Beat and you tell me and you say the rest is good but as soon I read my piece, it's some other shhh. Shhh I didn't even see some of my pieces. What happened, you lost it? I mean what's the point of writing to The Beat if you gonna switch them words around. It's like someone writing a book and the publishers putting in what he think sounds good. You under dig the (water?) I'm spittin' from under the sea bad? But it's good I still got love fo ya. The list of names I listed are very important to me and what makes my piece jump out.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Naudie Bo, we love how much you write, and how much love for your folks comes through in your writing. But we have rules about changing words for a reason, and we might not have explained it very well to you (sorry) — but we want you to understand. The Beat is first of all a guest of the system, so some words we just have to change not because we want to but because we don't want to get you or us in trouble with the hall's administration. What if it were your piece that got us kicked out of the hall? Wouldn't you feel terrible? Second, we respect the integrity of ALL Beat writers, but in the past some people have abused that privilege and written "RIP" notes to people who were still alive, and we made a rule about not listing names of people after that. Third, while neighborhoods and turfs are important to many of you, calling them out seems to get one in more trouble than bring one glory. So we try to make The Beat a turf-free space for young people in the halls to connect with each other about the experiences they share, not the boundaries that divide them. Lastly, this is a writing program, so sometimes we change words just because they're spelled "wrong." Let's keep this conversation going, because The Beat cares how you feel when you see your name in print in our pages.

My Life's Story

Well first of all, it all started off when I was eight months old and I was with my mom. She was 16 years old when she had me and my dad was 18 years old. My dad had just graduated from high school and my mom dropped out of school. She wasn't able to take of me, so my dad told my grandma, "Take care my son while I go to the army." He stayed in the army for about 2-3 years.

Me and my mom was supposed to go and live with my dad on the base, but my mom cheated on my dad and had my brother. Then I just stayed with my grandma. At age five I started walking and talking. The first time I walked was when my dad came home from the army and I ran into his arms.

Then at age nine is when my mom was trying to come back into my life. It worked out for a little while. She lived in Antioch and I would go and visit her in the summer and on weekends. It went okay until she lost the house. Then she got a studio in Richmond. I did the same visits on weekends and in the summer. A couple of years passed and I didn't hear from her, so I just said forget about my mom. I was living by the Cow Palace with my grandma. We moved to Oakland when I was ten years old.

Dad was in my life living with me and my grandma. I was going to school in the neighborhood elementary school, going every day.

Things went good. Years passed. I went to middle school. It was hard but I got used to it, and I started getting phone calls from my mom saying how sorry she is and she wants to come back into my life and be a mother to me. So I go and live with her.

She moved to San Francisco and I tried to live with her for a year. It really didn't work out. I tried but couldn't do it. School was really hard for me, too. Didn't know anybody. I was new. Mom didn't help me out with my homework. I was struggling, and I moved with my dad in Westlake.

I tried to live there for about two weeks and it didn't go well because his girlfriend did not like me. She had a baby by my dad, and she wanted my dad to do everything for him and nothing for me. So I moved with my grandparents. We got along really good, went on vacation every year, did things together like a family. I had started visiting my mom again and my brother told me that things had changed and everybody missed me, so I ran away and went and lived with my mom. It all went bad there since day one.

I got in trouble with my mom, started fighting with my brother and sisters, got on punishment and couldn't go outside, got in trouble in school, into fights. It all went bad for me. Six months later I go and move in with my dad in Union City. It was a little better. I didn't stress out that much, but I had a hard time when I lost someone close to me.

My iguana died. My dad had killed it. That was really depressing for me but I got over it. I still have leopard geckos. My dad is taking care of them. I had got accused of doing cream by my dad's baby's mama. They told my grandma that I was doing that, so that was really stressing for me. On top of that I had a girlfriend that lived in Fremont that caused nothing but trouble for me. Got into fights over her... got into hella shhhh.

After I got accused of doing a whole bunch of drugs, I moved with my friend. It went good for about twp weeks. My girl came over and hung out with me at the house. Later that night she missed the bus and I didn't have any money for a payphone to call my foster mom and my cell phone was turned off. So I walked her all the way back to the house, got into trouble for walking back late. Got in deep trouble, almost got kicked out.

A couple of days later me and my friend hung out with some girls, and they were all bad. Stayed in the house. While moms was there caught my friend having sex with the girl he was with. His mom went crazy. She banged on my door and said, "Is anyone in here?" I said no. The other girl said, "My sister is under the bed," and I said, "Damn! It's over!" Got yelled at and kicked out.

I moved with my grandma in Oakland. Went to school at University Preparatory Academy. It was a raw school. It had a mall inside the school. It was going good. I went to summer school there and decided that I liked it and went there for the school year. Got kicked out because I got into an argument. The principal didn't like me either, so I got kicked out instantly. We tried looking for school for me to go to, so I just stayed home for a whole school semester. At that time that's what I wanted. I didn't want to go to school. I just stayed home the whole time. Played video games, talked on the phone to my ex-lady that played me the first time I got locked up that really hurt me.

I was in Alameda County. They transferred me over here. I got that call before I got to the unit and called her. I said, "Hello. Is Tesha there? He said, "Who's calling?" I said, "BJ." He said hold on she hopped on the phone.

I said, "Hi, Baby." She said, "Oh, Hi." I said, "Why you say high like that?" She kept quiet. I asked her, "Have you been cheating on me?" She asked, "Where are you?" I said, "YGC Juvenile Hall in San Francisco." She said, Oh." I asked her two more times, "Tesha, have you been cheating on me?" She said, "Why are you worried about it?"

When she said that, I just started crying. I just didn't care who saw me crying. I said, "Why you do me like Sharnell?" She was my ex that played me too. She told me to hold on. She came back and she said hold on again. Her sister clicked on me. I was depressed.

I started going to Oakland High for a week. I got locked up for stabbing this one person 'cause they jumped on my grandma. I was heated like crazy. When I saw that person I said, "You think you gone do that to my grandma and get away with it?" I shanked him four times in the left shoulder, got caught by the boys. It was over.

Being locked up sucks. My grandma dad and god parents come and visit me on Saturdays. Mostly my god parents come visit me. I enjoy the visits. Well, that's how most of my life went. This concludes my story about the life of Billy, aka BJ.

- Bj B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've gone through a lot in your young life, Billy. And even though a lot of things have happened to you that you had no control over, you have also done some things that you do have control over, and those are the things we hope you work on so that you don't have to be locked up any more. All of us must learn better ways than violence (like shanking someone) to deal with our problems, because if we don't, we will never enjoy the beauty of life.

You Have a Choice

You had choice to do what you did.
 You had a choice to follow your friends.
 You had a choice to be free,
 You had a choice to be with your family.
 You had a choice to steal clothes.
 You had a choice not to steal out that store.
 You had a choice to skip school.
 You had a choice to act a fool.
 Now that you're dead and gone.
 Your body has been led to a deeper hole.
 When sometime shortly, I'm going to go
 If I keep riding on this road I'm on.

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whew, what a piece! It's a real matter of fact type, in your face, this is how it is type of poem. Well Lil' Joe, you do have a choice and you better make the right one, before you suffer the consequences of the wrong one.

Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

Going dumb is how you act when you feel good about that time in your life. I go dumb all the time because I'm super hyphy. At parties I go stupid do do dumb, but just for a while because I need to know what's going on around me.

Going dumb, stupid, or hyphy don't get you in trouble unless you just plain stupid. I say that because everyone should know when to stop. The Bay Movement is what it is about right now 'cause if you not with the movement then you going to get left. You don't have to be from a block or be a thug to go dumb, yourself. Mac Dre started the Bay Movement in my eyes, but now he dead. I think the Dre Boy summed up the lives of a lot of people in the Bay. RIP Mac Dre.

Going stupid is acting stupid, but being stupid is not knowing nothing.

-Qbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How do you define "plain stupid?" Does going dumb have anything to do with drugs, like smoking weed, popping E, or anything like that? Can you describe how you act at a party when you go "stupid do do dumb?"

Real Or Fake?

Now you see me. I just have a natural feeling for fake-ass ninjas. With the exception of about two people, I've always been able to tell when people are being fake wit' me. When you're talking to someone, if they just keep telling you about all the stuff they have and the stuff they do and can do, nine times out of ten, they lyin'. A real ninja ain't gotta talk and brag about what they got and do. He just do it.

Also, I can just feel when someone is lying. Most people have a habit of doing something when they lie. They may twitch, blink one eye, or both. Some people can't look you in the eye when they lie. They may forget their hands or their hair or something. Look out for signs...

-Q-B B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Now this is real talk! Reading body language is a survival tactic that will surely help you keep your head above water in a society where life isn't always as it seems. When you find yourself lying (if you do...), do you notice your own body language changing?

Love Trust

My parents got divorced when I was two years old. I am now 17 and I still am in the middle of it. My mom always tried to help me along, but my dad was a completely different story. I think I always believed my dad's lies because I didn't feel truly loved by him. He always lied to me about my mom. He would say that she is a whore, a cocaine addict, an alcoholic and a gold digger.

I don't think I ever believed him; but when you hear this week after week after week, you do start to second guess yourself (especially when you're young). When I first became a teen, I decided to finally wipe my dad out of my life. However, after two years, I tried to let him come back into my life. For a month he seemed genuine, but then I realized that he was exactly the same as before, just trying to use me to get to my mom.

Today I don't see my dad; but when I talk to him I still know he's trying to get to my mom. I love you mom. I don't trust dad.

-Barbie GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's really a terrible thing when fighting parents forget that their first obligation is to the children they made together, however they might feel about each other. We're sorry your dad wasn't able to love and appreciate you for who you are, and not just for what you could do for him in relation to your mom. But we think you are wise to recognize him for what he is, and not keep holding out hope that he will change, only to be disappointed. You write really well, so we're looking forward to more details about your past, and some details about what you want in your future.

Influenced

I made some dumb decisions in my life that I can't change. Running with the wrong crowd, banging sets and using gunfire. Did it all because I wanted to fit in. I thought they accept me because of me. Never had to change the way I was just to fit in. I'll be with the homies smoking every day thinking that I'm the shhh. I smoke three to seven blunts a day like it was nothing.

Then the homies got me in to robbin' people. That's how I was coming up. Rob somebody until I get about eight hundred dollars then I get some weed and crack and I be on the block grindin', jukin', tryin' to get my dough with no thang do it.

One of my days like this. I wake up and get dressed, go to the block around seven to nine smoking all morning, seeing all the homies then go to school. Then after rob people, come up, go back to the block and be on the grind.

Until I got shot at and ever since then I started thinking.

-Qp B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you have taken a good look at the life you were leading and seen the direction it was taking you in — and decided that's not where you want to go! We appreciate how you were led into the lifestyle you lived, but we appreciate even more that you've matured enough to want to make your own life's choices, and not follow someone else's. We're looking forward to the next part of this piece — the part that tells us how your thinking has changed since you got shot at.

Planning My Success

Every day I think about going home. Every day I get closer and closer to my dream. When I do go home, I've been locked up for so long, I can think of the right thing to do in all situations.

When I go home I'm gon' get me a job. I got a lil' girl on the way, so I got to do my thing. I need to be able to support my family, and selling coke could get it but the risk of me being away from my family and kid is just too harsh. I'd rather take the easy way out and get a job, whatever it may be, as long as it's a start. One day I want to be someone who is important in the community.

I got six more months until I get a release, and it may sound long, but I'd rather do six months than six years! You feel me? This time will be finished, and I'll be on the outs shining once again, doing the right thing.

-Al Boo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everything you write here is straight truth, and it's clear that you've done some serious thinking about your new responsibilities as a father. You're right that taking a job is in the end an easier route than selling coke (if you include getting shot at, getting caught up, serving time, etc.), but there will be hard times, too. You need to have your mind made up that you'll take the right route no matter what! That "I don't quit" attitude is even more important going legit than it is to the gangster who just got beat up and robbed. Yes, you will shine. And if you're tenacious, committed and determined, you will also become someone important in your community — 'cause that's what it takes to do it right, and that in itself is an important contribution to your community, that good example you'll be setting for others. Too many believe it's just not possible to change your game to legal.

I got six more months until I get a release, and it may sound long, but I'd rather do six months than six years!

Another Long Night

Eyes hella droopy and I still can't sleep
Thinkin' back on the hood, soakin' in memories
Of doin' it big, parlayin' in the bay
Hittin' the main with a '40, all day every day
Take a trip and you'll see some real shhh
Keep them eyes peeled, 'cause task been known to
flip
Ain't seen my varrio in three-hundred plus days
It's death before dishonor, pumping through my veins
Hear my lil' man's gettin' big
When I left he just turned six
Now he's seven wit 'a bullet, ain't that some shhh?
I got too many reasons to keep it lit and stay breathin'
I love the smell of gunsmoke when it's funk season
Reminisce on them days we pulled all nighters
Keg stands straight upside down getting higher and
higher
Leanin' up against my window just tryin' to get some
light
Damn, this gone' be another one of them long nights.

-Young Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well look at that, moving from prose to poetry and having just as much talent for the second one as the first. We love seeing you try your hand at Shakespeare's chosen form, and we have a feeling this won't be the last of it. You'll find that there is a better smell than the smell of gunsmoke: It's the smell of fresh paper waiting for your pen. (That little boy looks up to you, so your attitude towards life will have a hand in shaping his destiny, whether you're locked up or on the outs. What do you plan to show him?)

I ain't going to play with the game.
I am just goin' to do what I got to,

eat and go
to church with momma.

Let Me Tell You

Man, bra, it's been very rough this year man I can't stop thinking about all the people that passed and all the people that died in front of me this year, and my bra goin' down for murder for 25 to life. Man, bra this shhh is serious.

Ninjas need to stop playin' with the game bra this shhh is getting real crazy, but all I got to stay about the matter is I am about to eat for all my ninjas. No playin' bra, this shhh is serious for all the ninjas in here, think to fight all the other shhh. Man I'm sorry for you bra everytime you go to court you got to get detained. Man bra, just take your problems to the other ninja trying to get out and stop playing bra, I ain't going to play with the game. I am just goin' to do what I got to, eat and go to church with momma. Man stop playin' and eat. That's the real go dumb hyphy movement to me goin' skits and still doin' what you got to do.

-Lil' Tim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written a powerful message, Tim. If going dumb is the best thing, then the real, ultimate going dumb thing to do is not play the game right. You've got the voice of a teacher, so use it.

First Few Minutes of Freedom

I don't smoke, so I can't spark up the blunt. I don't drink so
I can't crack a 40.
The first minute of freedom I think of my family and when
I'm gonna see them.
The second I call my girlfriend to see where she is 'cause I
just got released.
That third minute I walk out my front door and see a lot of
what I missed in the past months being in the hall.

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You wrote so well about the first three minutes that we almost wish we had asked you for the whole first hour, or the whole first date! Great little piece of writing, we're looking forward to more!

Worst Crimes and Charges

I think one of the worst crimes is murder.
Murder is a bad thing to do.
Another is child abuse.
People who beat their children are dumb.
Or people who beat their boyfriend or girlfriend, that is a
serious crime.
Rape is another serious crime that people are really low to
do.
Assault and battery is another crime that is bad.
Possession of sales is bad,
or possession with the intent to sell is pretty bad.
Weapons charges like guns,
bombs or explosives, are a pretty crazy charge and crime.
A lot of people I know have most of these charges,
myself included.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How is it that a lot of people you know, including yourself, come to commit acts that you see as bad or serious or one of the worst crimes and charges? Without further incriminating yourself, how did you come to commit such crimes? Tell us the story of it so we can better understand how it happens.

Never Alone

Not alone, never that
Stop all this crazy talk an' change the map
Get it together
Killings, rape, takin' from one another
Go by day by day
Holdin' in these tears, tryna not to cry
Wondering man what's goin' to happen when I die
Don't worry 'bout that, live today
Every second, every minute, every hour
Live it to the fullest
Stop all these worst crimes a person can commit
Don't think about what happens when you die
An' remember, it's ok to cry
Never alone in this beg mess

-C-El-Smooth, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We appreciate the message here, but we wonder when you advise people to live to the fullest what exactly do you have in mind. Some people think living to the fullest means always playing, getting what you want how you want, etc. Is that what you had in mind? At the same time, you urge people to stop committing these worst crimes, so you have a more responsible definition of living life to the fullest. We would love for you to spell that definition out for us.

Holdin' in these tears, tryna not to cry
Wondering man what's goin' to happen when I die

Eternal Sleep

What Cito thinks happens once people die is that we go into an eternal sleep that we can control after time. A sleep that if you were a good person in life or if you forgive or be forgiven for things, you will have a good dream. If you were bad and evil, and did things that were wrong to other people or animals, you will have eternal nightmare in your dreams. You can call it hell if you would like. That's Cito's opinion.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Who judges you to decide if you were good or evil? Could the life we are living now actually be our eternal sleep dream? What will CITO be dreaming about in eternity?

¿Que Hay En Mi Sangre?

En mi sangre yo creo que corre mucho orgullo de ser Mexicano. Mi mama y mi papa nunca fueron pandillero y creo que ningún miembro de mi familia han sido pandilleros. Mi sangre es más deportista. Yo creo que toda mi familia ha sido muy unida. Todos mis tíos enseñan a jugar soccer a todos sus hijos. Es como una tradición. También en mi sangre esta ir al colegio porque todos mis primos han acabado el colegio. La mayoría de ellos estan estudiando una carrera. Es por eso que yo me siento orgulloso de mi familia. En mi sangre corre todo un hombre de ser, deportista y trabajador.

From The Beat: ¿Si tienes la sangre de gente deportista, buena y estudiosa, entonces que te está pasando? ¿Por que quieres ser eceptción de tu familia? Nadie de tu familia anda en cosas malas. Deberias de seguir sus pasos y alejarte de lo que te trajo aqui. ¿No te gustaria sentirte orgulloso de ser como ellos?

What's In My Blood?

I believe that in my blood runs a lot of joy for being Mexican. My mother and my father were never gang-bangers, and I believe that not a single member of my family has been a gangster.

My blood is more athletic. I believe that all my family has been very united. All my uncles teach all their children how to play soccer. It's like a tradition. Going to school is also in my blood because all my cousins have finished their schooling. The majority of them are studying a career. That is why I feel very proud of my family.

In my blood runs everything a human being can be, athletic and a hard-worker.

-Christian B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you have the blood of athletic, good and studious people, then what is going on? Why do you want to be an exception to what your family is all about? No one in your family is involved in bad things. You should follow their footsteps and distance yourself from the kinds of things that brought you in here. Wouldn't you like to feel proud to be like them?

Bad Lies, Good Lies

Lies goes around and people who lie give you false information. It is good to lie sometimes, but it is not good to lie too much. A good lie is when you covering for your homeboy about him being late for his work. A bad lie is when you be telling the judge you didn't do it but you actually do it.

-Yin Yang B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for getting deeper into the question of lies by comparing two different situations. You are well-named, Yin Yang. Some people believe it is wrong to lie in all situations. (And others seem to believe it's never wrong to lie.)

La Vida Que Llebo

Este es tu boy, Duende, encerrado de nuevo. Sali de la casa escupiendole sangre y solo escuche los gritos de mi madre. Los niños con lagrimas preguntando que pasaba, "¿Por que mi hermano se va de la casa a la calle?" La boca de la maldad dijo, "No me digan nada porque amí no me importa." Soy una fiera quemandome en la calle y no hay nadie que me ayude. Peleo en la carretera, escuchando la placa y empieza la carrera de alcohol y droga y mucha violencia.

Mama perdona a tu hijo mayor. Yo sé que soy la causa de todo tu dolor. Mi mente fría, mi corazón peor. Los angeles en el cielo no descubren que lo niños pequeños ya estan batallando. Ellos no se quieren, se odian.

Todos mueren en este mundo de traiciones.

From The Beat: ¿Te arrepientes de haberter portado en la manera como lo hicistes? La verdad es que te has portado muy mal con tu madre y también con toda tu familia. Has estado viviendo una vida que no es normal y si la sigues viviendo de esta manera no vas a llegar a otro lado que sea mejor que donde estas ahorita. Tienes que tomar tu tiempo y reflexionar en las cosas que estas haciendo. ¿Crees que la vida siempre sera la misma de siempre? Te equivocas, la vida no es solo eso.

The Life That I Lead

This is your boy, Duende, locked up once again. I left the house spitting blood and I only heard my mother's screams. The kids with tears in their eyes asking what was going on, "Why is my brother leaving the house for the streets?" The mouth of evil said, "Don't say anything to me because I don't care." I am a rage, burning in the street, and there's no one who can help me. I find on the road, on the lookout for the police, and the race with alcohol and drugs and lots of violence begins.

Mom, forgive your oldest son. I know that I am the cause of all your pain. My mind is cold, my heart is worse. The angels in the sky have yet to discover that the little kids are already battling. They don't love one another; they hate each other. Everyone dies in this world of traitors.

-Duende, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Do you regret behaving yourself in the way that you did? The truth is that you have behaved yourself very bad with your mother and also with your entire family. You have been living a life that is not normal and if you continue living it this way, you're not going to end up in another place that is better than the one you are in right now. You have to take your time and reflect on the things that you are doing. Do you believe that life will be the same like always? You're wrong; life is not just that.

Man To Boy Rape Is The Worst Crime

The worst crime to commit is a grown men raping a little boy. There's many reasons why a grown man shouldn't rape a no little boy, that's just plain wrong. And raping a child because you can't get the real woman, and when it's man raping a boy that's just plain sick. Nothing's so wrong that you have to go so low to rape a child.

I heard in the pen if you hurt or rape a child or if they kill or rape or beat a woman, they goin' to kill you. So if a grown man rape a little boy they whole projects should kill. I don't even think they police care about another man raping a little boy. All they care about is the young ninjas that's got guns in the ghetto.

So to me raping a little boy is the lowest thing to do and it's the worst crime ever to commit.

-CJ B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Raping anyone is just plain wrong, and raping a child is a devastating crime whether the victim is a boy or a girl. You described a grown man who rapes a boy as "just plain sick." So, if they really are sick, then why do you want them killed? What do you think makes boys grow into rapists? What do you think happened to adults who molest children when they were children themselves? We're not trying to excuse a terrible crime, we're trying to understand it. Do you know any boys who were the victims of childhood rape or sexual abuse? How are they handling it?

Yo He Cambiado Mucho

Desde que me trajeron a la juvenil yo he cambiado mucho. Estando aqui me he dado cuenta lo que es importante de mi vida, aunque se que no soy culpable. Yo he cambiado mi personalidad y mis pensamientos. Cuando estaba afuera yo nunca le di un abrazo a mi mama. Nunca le dije que la quiero mucho. Mi familia es una de las cosas más importante en mi vida. Cuando estaba afuera nunca lo quise reconocer. Ahora estar con mi familia es lo que más quiero.

He sufrido mucho no porque estoy aqui pagando por algo que otras personas hicieron sino porque he visto las lágrimas de mi familia al verme en este lugar.

Lo único que me gustaría que las otras personas es que aprendan a hacer el bien y que aprecien todo lo que tienen porque la vida esta llena de sorpresas. Si nosotros estamos con Dios, tenemos que estar seguro de que él nos va a ayudar a sobrevivir y nos va a hacer mejores personas en la vida.

Para todas las personas que estan haciendo mal en las calles, solo les digo que dejen de hacer esa cosas y se pongan al día con Dios.

From The Beat: Que bien que estando aqui encerrado te haya ayudado a reflexionar en las cosas que estas haciendo mal. Esto es uno de los propositos la cual estas aqui. La familia es una de las cosas más importante y eso ya te distes cuenta. Siempre hay que saber estimar a aquellos quienes nos dan todo el apoyo, nos quieren lo mejor para nosotros, pero en muchos casos, nosotros siempre terminamos no escuchandolos y las consecuencias son resultados de nuestro desobediencia. Esperamos que esta vez que salga hagas las cosas bien para que tu familia puedan respirar con muchas ganas. Gracias por tu consejo. Esperamos que ellos los sigan.

I've Changed A Lot

Ever since the moment that they brought me here to Juvenile Hall, I have changed a lot. Being in here has made me realize what is important in my life, even though I know that I am not guilty. I have changed my personality and my thoughts. When I was on the outs, I never gave my mother a hug. I never told her that I love her very much. My family is one of the most important things in my life. When I was on the outs, I never wanted to recognize this. Now, to be with my family is what I want the most.

I have suffered a lot, not because I am in here paying for something that other people did, but because I have seen the tears shed by my family because of seeing me in this place.

The only thing that I would like is for other people to learn to do what's right and to appreciate what they have in life because life is full of surprises. If we are with God, we have to remain positive that He is going to help us to survive and that He is going to make us better persons in life.

For all the people who are doing bad things out in the streets, I just want to tell y'all to stop doing those kinds of things and to live your days with God.

-Nestor B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's great that being locked up in this place has helped you reflect on the things that you are doing wrong. Not thinking about things is one of the reasons you are here. One's family is one of the most important things and you have finally realized this. One always has to know to have esteem for those who give us all their support, who only want what's best for us. But in many cases, we end up not listening to them and the consequences is our our disobedience. We hope that this time when you get out, you do things the right way so your family can take deep and peaceful breaths. Thank you for your words of advice. We hope that they follow them.

Thank You, Mom

My name is C-los and this is how my blood run. My mother Martha RIP was a very strong woman. She was my mother and father at the same time, 'cause my daddy was never there. He always used to come home drunk and beat the crap out of me until he got locked up.

I have four sisters and three brothers plus me. My oldest brother was sixteen years old, had to quit school and get a job to help my mom raise all of us since we were in need of food and shelter. My mom worked two jobs. She was a part-time nurse and full-time cashier at a market store. My brother drove a taxi even though he was sixteen. He was at risk of getting pulled over, but hey, this Mexico City. You can buy your way out of it.

I gotta thank my mom because if it wasn't for her I wouldn't be alive.

-Carlos B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like your mom was a very special person who gave you very special values. Now, how can you honor her memory and respect what she stood for when you get out of here? If she could talk to you now, what do you think she would be telling you?

Random Crime Is The Most Evil

The topic to write about was what I thought was the worst crime a person could commit. It's pretty hard to determine, because any crime committed affects people differently. Who could judge which crimes are worse? There are the obvious crimes, like murder and rape, even molestation cases. These are worse than theft crimes and what not, but the circumstances are always different.

I think the worst crime a person could commit is one that is done by someone who doesn't know the person who is about to be victimized. At least if it's premeditated, then there's an understanding that they have something you want. At least there is a motive, a reason, even if it's not a good one, as to why you chose that person. When it's random, like when you just decide to do something and don't care about who, then it's straight up cruel. You knew you were doing something bad, and you did it to whoever was near, whether they deserved it or not, and that makes it far worse!

-Xavier, Marin

From The Beat: Do you mean that you think that if someone commits a crime against someone he/she knows personally, that on some level the perpetrator must feel that the victim deserves it, Xavier? Do you believe that when someone hurts another person they don't know, that somehow it's more evil because that means that there's some nihilistic, empty force at work, and that no matter how righteous a life the victim has led, he can't defend himself against a crime caused by an anonymous, impersonal force, rendering life inherently unfair? Very interesting.

Unheard Cries

I'm sick and tired of all these lies
Sick and tired of these unheard cries
Knowing you can't be a real G with a wife
'Cause you can't really trust no one
'Cause they might stab you in the back with a knife
Making you vulnerable for having these assets
By asset, I mean the wife
'Cause if they can't come after you
They'll come after your asset
So what the point of riskin' it?

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You ask a really interesting question, NGO! If someone really wants to be a G, a gangsta, does he have to front all the time? Does he have to pretend he isn't close to or care about? Does he really have to detach himself from everyone, so his enemies who can't get to him personally, can't reach him through his lady, kids, family, or anyone else he loves either? What do you think, NGO? Would it be worth it to you to give up everyone emotionally, or at least have to pretend to all the time, to maintain the status and image of a G? When Puff Daddy aka P Diddy split with Jennifer Lopez, then wrote "I Need A Girl," some guys think he was weak for the first time. What do you say?

About The Streets—An Interview

With Marcus, Dre And Ngo

TBW: What would you like to be interviewed about today, Marcus? What's on your mind?

M: About the streets.

TBW: Ok, that's fine. What's it like for you out there in the streets?

M: It's kinda hard, ya feel me? I make money. Keep 20s (Jordans) on my feet. Somethin' clean.

TBW: Why is it so hard for you out there?

M: Most of my ninjas ain't got no unity.

TBW: What, besides making money in the streets, do you like to do?

M: Be in my studio. We got a cool studio. It ain't all that, but it's cool. We have a computer, a beat maker. We make music.

TBW: Do you write music? Lyrics? Produce music? What's your role in creating the music?

M: I write music.

TBW: What kind?

Dre: He don't wanna say.

TBW: Why not, Marcus? Do you write raps? Some kind of hip-hop?

M: I don't wanna say.

TBW: Rhythm and blues? Soul? Jazz?

M: Yeah, R and B.

Dre: He don't wanna say because he doesn't want people to think he's weak.

TBW: You mean, if people knew he wrote anything besides gangsta rap, they'd think he was weak?

Dre: Yeah.

Marcus: Yeah.

TBW: Why?

Dre: That's just it.

Marcus: Yeah.

TBW: What else do people think is weak, that means you have to front? Can you give us an example?

Dre: Like if you're an OG. You can't make any friendships, you can't have a lady, because if your enemies can't get to you directly, they'll go after your lady, your kid, and you can't protect them all the time, and they can get to you through them.

TBW: Is that true?

Marcus: Yeah.

Ngo: Yeah.

TBW: Do you mean, like when Jennifer Lopez split up with Puff Daddy, P Diddy, and Puff wrote, "I Want A Girl" people thought he was weak?

Dre: Yeah.

TBW: Do you think he was weak?

Dre: Yeah.

TBW: Because he sounds like he's crying for Jennifer?

Dre: Yeah.

TBW: So OGs can't show any emotion ever?

Ngo: No.

TBW: That sounds really lonely.

Marcus: Yeah.

-Marcus, Dre, Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do any of you give up having a girlfriend, a family, because you want to be gangstas? If so, does it make you lonely? Do you ever have girlfriends or families you keep on the down low, so your rivals can't get to you through them? Do you ever consider forgetting being a G, because it isn't worth the pressure and worry of fronting all the time? Do you ever lose track of how you truly feel about things, who you really are, because you have to pretend too much? Why don't you write an essay, a rap or a poem about the inner life of a G? Better yet, why don't you write and R&B song!

A Real Smile

To me a sincere smile is someone who shows feelings. A fake smile doesn't show feelings, it shows back stabbing. You gotta also put some effort into your smile. There been plenty of times when someone has flashed a fake smile towards me, from females to close friends and family.

I've trusted too many people's smiles for kindness, friendliness, and trust. A smile can tell a lot of things if you were in front of me right now and said "hello" to me just to be friendly and I gave you a smile just to let you know that back, how would you feel about it?

That's exactly how I feel when I get one, but as far as family goes I trust them no matter what. That's family but when I receive a fake smile from them I take it as a weird sign of "love"

PLUS YOU GOTTA HAVE GOOD TEETH!

-Guess Who?, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's one of the greatest things about you - no matter what you write about, you always keep your sense of humor. That last sentence cracked us up, and brought a (real) smile to our faces. Keep flossing and brushing them teeth of yours!

It's Always Good To Cry

I always feel it's good to cry. You got to let it out. It don't make me less of a man because I cry. Perfect example, I cried at my homies' funeral. Marcus and Wag was the homies. It hurt to see them leave like that.

When I know I'm doing my mom wrong like I am now, I cry. If you don't let emotions out then you will explode like fire or fold like origami,

-M-Daddy Stoffice B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, crying doesn't make you any less a man. However, most boys are brought up saying that crying makes you a coward. That's we admire your point of view, because you are resisting that kind of early education. Some people would rather hide all their emotions inside than let those tears drop.

Una Persona Menos

Yo escribo de una persona que conoci en YGC, pero ya no lo veo porque lo deportaron a su pais. Era un buen amigo que confiaba y lo estimaba. El estaba aqui sin familia y cuando se fue me senti triste porque veo que muchos salen y yo todavía me quedo aqui. Espero el día de mi corte que me vaya bien y me puedan dejar ir a mi casa con mi familia.

Lo que escribi no fue lo mejor, pero es lo que senti cuando perdi a ese amigo. ¿El futuro de mi amigo? Espero que se quede en su pais con su familia, que aprenda a escribir y leer.

From The Beat: Esperamos que donde quiera que este tu amigo le vaya bien y que este disfrutando con su familia. Ahora el que tiene que preocuparse en estar bien eres tú. ¿Has estado trabajando en como recuperar tu vida? Si no has pensado en esto, deberias de estarlo haciendo.

One Less Person

I'm writing about a person that I met in YGC, but I don't see him no more because he was deported back to his native country. He was a good friend who I confided in and I had esteem for. He was in this country without any family members and when he left, I felt sad because I see that many others get out and I still remain in this place. I hope that on my court date, everything goes well for me and they let me go to my house and be with my family.

What I wrote was not the best, but that's what I felt when I lost that friend. My friend's future? I hope that he stays in his country with his family and that he learned to read and write.

-Jorge B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that wherever your friend may be, everything goes well for him and that he is enjoying himself with his family. Now, the person who has to worry about being OK is you. Have you been working towards getting your life back? If you haven't thought about this, you should be doing so.

My Regret

Runnin' through my mind are a lotta thoughts
 Maybe I should blame myself for getting caught
 Or maybe I shouldn't have did the crime at all
 Now I've been locked up in Juvenile Hall
 For 25 days, I'm in this small-ass room
 Hopin' to get outta here soon
 Every night I think about what I did
 Didn't think it would really turn out like this
 I coulda been outside doing something else
 Instead I'm trapped in this room all by myself
 Being in the halls is an awful sight
 I'ma regret that day for the rest of my life

-Danny Boy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't know what that crime of regret is, but 25 days in lock-up is a small price to pay if it makes you realize that you can't keep living in the same way you've been living. When you say that maybe you shouldn't have committed the crime that brought you here, why is that only a maybe? If the lesson you learn is to be slicker and not get caught, then this 25-day experience will be a total waste, and you'll find yourself in much worse places doing much more time...

Tears Of Pain, Tears Of Relief

I feel it's okay to cry when somebody passes in your family, or something bad happens or you're in a bat situation. Sometimes you can cry just to cry, just to feel better. Sometimes you could cry just by the smallest things, like losing a basketball game or something

The last time I cried was in here. I cried because I came in here and I knew it was time to make a change. I didn't want the others to see my cry, but it would have been all right if they did. We all cry but we don't show it.

I've also cried out of happiness when I won football games, basketball games. Sometimes you cry because you live to see another day.

-D'sha B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for admitting that you can cry over big things and small things, important things and not so important things. Human emotions are complicated, and whatever we've been taught about when and when not to cry, those tears will just come when they want.

When You Felt It Was Okay To Cry

It's all right to cry all the time. I think that nobody should feel that they need to hide tears. Everybody has to cry, it's part of emotions. Crying releases your anger.

I respect men/boys that cried because they feel like they got to act hard all the time. It's different trying to comfort a female than a male. I seen a lot of people cry. It's all right to cry. I'm a cry baby.

-Princess GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love your observation that it's different comforting females than males. We'd love to read some of your examples. We also love your defense of crying. Why do you think boys are taught not to cry (even though they do)?

Dumb, Stupid And Hyphy

It means that this is the way that we feel when we're at a party or when we just feel that way... we just get loose. It's a movement that's going through the Bay because we got a lot of energy. So when we hear music it just makes us stupid, dumb and hyphy and have fun.

I have never got in trouble for going stupid, dumb or hyphy. People just don't understand us, like counselors in the hall don't understand us. It is not ridiculous. They are not in are era, so they don't feel us, YOU FEEL ME!

-Cash B B4, SF/YGC

The Beat Within: You are so right. It's amazing how quickly we forget the things we did when we were your age that drove people our age (and your counselors' age) crazy! The way we danced was one of those things, so it's even stranger that adults would find your way of dancing "ridiculous." We may not feel your music the way you do, but we definitely feel you!

It's About The Girl

What about the girl that's smart?
 What about the girl that's kind?
 What about the girl you have at home?
 Is she sitting at home all alone?
 What do you think about
 When you can't use the phone?
 What is it like
 When you write
 And she don't write back?
 How does it feel being avoided?
 So what about the girl?
 That you thought you could trust?
 And you thought was your true love?
 So how does it feel?
 To know she's not home alone?
 It must be hell
 Because most of the time
 You could be spending with her
 You're spending in jail
 So how does it feel
 When you didn't get a visit?
 And you couldn't see her face?
 No one will really know the truth
 'Cause you're not there
 So at night you think to yourself
 That no one's there
 Know that someone cares
 So when I get out
 I will be there
 So time is passing
 Months are going by
 Her due date is around the corner
 So you'll be saying goodbye
 So when you get out
 You don't have time to spare
 So go back home
 And don't be alone
 Go out and fulfill your destiny
 Because I know your love is there

-Te Shawn LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You write beautifully about a young man whose lady is pregnant, but the trust between them is somehow gone. It must be wrenching, scary and lonely for both parents-to-be. Some things in life, like your lady becoming pregnant, you going to juvy, or in general being broke, getting expelled from school, for example, can make your priorities line right up and all nonsense goes right out the window. You can realize exactly what you really care about and what you don't. But in a relationship, with the lady pregnant and the man in juvy, confusion and distrust can set in. We hope you and your new family can work it out as soon as you're free. Good luck!

Murder And Rape, The Worst

The worst crimes to me are murder and rape. Murder because someone makes it so that a person or people can't live no more. Also because you can do life in prison.

Rape because you may be hurting someone for life. Making people change forever when they could have been the way they wanted to be in life. Rape could be worse because murder could make it so that people go into a better life faster. Murder could also be worse because we don't know what happens after death.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like how you think about more than one side of a question. Murder has permanent consequences not just for the victim but also for the victim's family. Rape also has life-long consequences for the victim, so we understand why you chose these two crimes as being the worst.

The Lies of Hyphy

Just because you got gold grill and dreadlocks
don't mean that you are hyphy.

Lies:

because the next ninja said this or that
then you beat on that person.
And he don't even know you.

Why?

Hyphy:

If the next man is talkin' out the side of his neck
then that's when you get hyphy.
But if you drunk and getting hyphy for no reason,
then that's when you find yourself in here with me.

Why?

Lies:

Now I get in here and hear other people talk
about how much money they making.
Or how they going to beat the next person down.

Why?

Lies:

When you tell moms I am going to school today.
Then go skip first period to smoke weed or shoot dice.

Why?

Lies:

When you tell that girl about how much you love her
just so you can get into her panties.

Why?

Lies:

When you tell the next person about how you going to
change

but then you get a release, and you go back
on the corner selling drugs.

Why?

When you got a GED and you're going to college.
Trying to do something with yo' life.
Trying to be something in your life.
Now you can call me special.

-Lil' Germ, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In this poem/essay, you turn all the crazy things we do to mess ourselves up, upside down and make us rethink it. Like you, we suddenly think - why? Why do we do so many stupid things? And then the best part is at the end, when you suggest a new way to live life - yeah, we'd call that special. Extra special.

Routine

I did not find any of the topics this week to be interesting, so I wanted to portray my day in here as opposed to my day in the real world. I wake up here at seven-thirty, brush my teeth and wash my face, then go back and clean my room and get ready for breakfast. If I am lucky, I am on crew. After breakfast, we have school.

After fourth period we have lunch. After that it's back to our rooms. We come out again for the fifth period and then it's right back to our private sweats.

We come out for six period which is PE, and after a rinse, it's back to our home away from home. We come out for a rec. and then again we go back to our one-room apartment!

And again and again and again, back to our four walls; this continues for about another six hours and then... and then it starts again.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you do when you have rec or other time when activities aren't programmed? What do you read? Do you play chess? Do you have meaningful conversations? Do you ever want to return here for the same dead-end routine?

Cry

I feel that you should be able to cry whenever you have to.

I think that every real man cry.

The strongest man in the world cry.

Everybody cry when it's necessary.

I even cry when it's necessary.

When I first came here I cried.

And when I think about my family at night I cry.

I miss them and I know I messed up.

But you just gotta stay strong and keep yo' head up, real talk.

'Cause it's hard in here.

Trust me, I know.

-Darion, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Darion, it is hard, life is hard. When we are overwhelmed with frustration, sometimes all we can do is cry. We have to release it somehow, then move on. We agree with you. Sometimes we cry too.

"Don't Be One of Those Guys on the Corner"

The best advice anyone ever gave me was to stay in school and don't be another one of these guys that hangs on the corner. The person who gave me that advice was my grandpa, he told me to be myself and don't try to become something I'm not.

My grandpa always tells me that I have a good head on my shoulders and don't waste it. When I get out of jail I'm going to follow his advice and do what I'm supposed to do.

-Albert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Three cheers for your grandfather! It's such a lucky thing that while all these different people are giving you the wrong messages, you've got someone who believes in you, who sees all your capacity for greatness, and who thinks you deserve more than this messed up street life. With his support and your resolution, you can turn your life around!

The Rise Of A Hood Star, a Fictional Memoir

Chapter Two

[In Chapter One of his fictional memoir, Sax told us of how he walked up into a crowd on the corner by the bus stop, telling folks they were making the block hot, only to discover that everyone there was being arrested for participating in a string of robberies on AC Transit buses. They were called the AC Transit bandits on TV. But Sax's dad stood up at court and told the judge that his son couldn't have done it 'cause he was in school all day, and then his father drove him cross-town to see a friend. And Sax was released on EM, or rather Home Supe' — but not until he'd made some robbery plans with Lil' J whom he'd met in the maximum security unit during his first stay in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.]

Fresh out on EM, I cut that thing off fast and got up out of there. You know how to get wet fast bra! I got back in the game, hittin' licks with my big brother Bo-Ruckas, runnin' through houses, coming out with racks, stacking and postin' in the hood.

Messing with Lil' J, I was touchin' on blocks I never been to, on cold set up's, stripping people out they cars, taking everything! On a bad day we went through five cars, high speeds getting out of there. We was doing too much through the hood profiling — the boys (five-oh, the police) got on us! He hop out when the car was still going! After it stop, I hop out and ran right past Task. I went up the street — and got slammed back to the hall! Damn.

-Sax, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This chapter is so fast and short and sweet, that we get the point that Sax didn't have too good a plan on his release, trying to show he's all that on the street just like he had in the unit. But now, we have to wonder where this story is going? Is Sax learning anything from his mistakes? Or will he just continue to mindlessly hurtle from place to place, always trying to prove he's the man with the high-profiling gangster face?

In Less Than A Month I'm Turning Eighteen

When I look back, I've accomplished nothing.
Most seniors are graduating as we sit here and write.
People are starting their summer while we sit in hot
ass rooms,
as I'm turning 18 and finishing up my last time in the
hall,
waiting for camp.
I wonder if it will stop here or will I graduate to county
or the pen?

-Meeda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Meeda, you're almost there. Half the people on lockdown are too busy hiding from the truth to write what you just did. Yeah, you're on a crossroads, and it could go either way, and yeah, like you say, it's time to make decisions because you're about to be an adult. But when you write "I wonder" it's like your watching the movie of your life and wondering what will happen next. But you're not just the star of that movie, you're also the writer and the director: The only person who has the power to decide how the movie ends is you. Don't "wonder"! Decide! And let us know what decision you make.

The Exact Same Thing

Every morning, every day
It's the exact same thing
Wake up, brush my teeth
I mop, ya do the same
Eat breakfast in my room
Every morning, every day
It is the exact same thing
Wake up, brush ya teeth
Lunch and dinner, too
Try and get an education
Inside this hall school
Green shirt on
I'm singled from the group
Trapped inside the cage
Play handball for a few
Later that day, I gotta take my shower
Come out that night for a couple hours
24 hours, 7 days a week
That's life in the hall
I know it sound weak

-Lew Lew, Marin

From The Beat: Just like on the outs, how you manage your time—reading, drawing, playing games, sports, hanging with the other youth inside with you, watching TV, etc., it's on you, right? So, just like when you're free, don't you think that if your life is weak, who else but you is at fault? Do you think juvy may be designed to be so dull that all of you inside will resolve to never return? So, if your life lacks thrills, profundity, meaning, no matter where you are, what can you do to enhance it?

Summer Fun

'Sup Beat? I've been in B2 for about three weeks. Well, I got court this Friday, 6-23-06. My summer started out bad already. If I was in the outs I would be too busy for trouble. I got a job that's been calling my house for weeks. Birthday parties, Great America, L.A., Marine World, Water World, shopping, and a lot more things to do.

But yes I messed up, and now I'm waiting so the judge can release me or send me to a group home. Well, if they do let me out I'm gonna only have like a week in the city, then I'm moving...

I hope they can release me. Peace out.

-LiL E B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's a whole lot of fun you are missing LiL E. Marine World, Great America, and LA all beat sitting in a jail cell anytime. We hope this time when you get out you will finally straighten out all the way and not get into any more trouble, because it would be very disappointing to have to see you in the halls again. Where are you moving? What are you going to do there?

Stress

i can't sleep at night i ain't resting
thinking 'bout my case got me stressing
don't know what's going happing ain't no guessing
folks at home saying i shoulda learned a lesson
charging me as an adult or a juvenile
sending me away all in exile
gang task force got me all on file
saying my crime was gruesome like bile
trying to give me double digits in the pen
i ain't had court in two months so tell me when
i can't have no more of them sleepless nights
ninjas tryin' to prove themselves but don't know how to
fight
open up them mouths trying to test me
but all that tryin' to do is get a rep see
this can't be real it's all a dream
but when i do rest i wake up and see the same scene

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're headed toward being poet laureate of The Beat Within, the voice of all those youths living a life of sin facing consequences they never even imagined — this new reality more like a bad dream than anything you've ever seen before. It's bad enough what the DA and the court say, then these fools all around you trying to make you pay for what? Pay for the fact that they got stuck themselves in the same place? Naw, you got it right: they're just tryin' to add some fame to they' face. Everything in here run by fear and aggression. This place would have Superman sweatin'. But with all that said, there's still a higher question: are you ready to change yourself from the inside out, no matter what comes about in the courtroom. It's brightest source of light in all this gloom, to turn your focus on you and improve in the little things you do, even the way you think and see can rise above this snakepit of desperate thugs and have you wrestling with angels in the service of love, forgiveness and the power of truth to transform the darkest moments of your youth into living proof that change can shatter chains of the past until you can honestly claim to be free at last.

Topic Suggestions For The Beat

My message is to The Beat staff. You should get better topics, and bring some back from years ago — questions like: "How do you give a boy/girl an orgasm?" Nah, but really: "What would you tell the younger generations so they won't end up like you or make the same mistakes."

Don't ask us, "What's the worst crime a person can commit?" Don't come at us like that, but like, "Who do you love most?" Or: "Is it love or just lust?" Yeah, that's a good topic! Or: "Is your money better than life? Is your money more important than your family and friends?" Give us topics like that.

-Baby Boi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's really cool to see you take such an interest in our topics. So why not come down to our office, do some typing and office work, make a little money legally, and join our young staff in putting together Beat topics? But hey, it's not money versus family, right? — isn't it how you get your money that creates problems? Or becoming addicted to "fast" money, so that even when you know you'll get caught up for something sooner or later, you keep going back to the hot spot till you get caught?

Father And Mother In One

When I was five years old
My mother died of cancer
I had three brothers and two sisters at the time
That's when my father had also become a mother to me
He took the job of a mother to raise us
I don't understand how he did what he did
(To be continued)

-Tan B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are so used to reading about mothers who took both roles to raise their children because the father left his sperm and nothing else. So it is an eye-opening surprise to read of a father who became both mother and father. We want to know how he did it too, and why you are here instead of at home helping him?

RIP Cell, RIP Webb

When I felt it was okay to cry was when Cell died and when Webb died. When Webb died, bra look' purple! And everybody was sad or crying. And when I touch' him, he was hard as a rock — and then tears came to my eyes!

And when Cell died, I was shock'! Because I had just seen him the other day, and then everybody was like, "Cell gone, brah." And I was like, "Fo' real?" And we went to the funeral. Cell' mom gave me and Lil' Bra a ride, and we gave her a hundred dollars each, to pay for the funeral.

And when we got there, his mom was crying. And then I start' crying because bra look hard too — and he was a little purple — and I hate to see him and his mom like that! And I just hope no more of my squad have to be like that. So RIP Cell; RIP Webb.

-Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Show your squad that there's another way to make their pay than standing out there like a target on the block everyday. We can see how smart you are, and you could go far in a legal job. Yeah, you have to start at the bottom, but then you rise. Keep going the way you're going, and either you too will die or you'll be locked somewhere inside getting way less than minimum wage, doing it just to get out of your cage. Serious business: start the change today, for yourself and everyone in your squad, and all of their families, okay? RIP Cell. RIP Webb.

Not Worth It

What up Beat, this yo' boy from B unit and I 'm writing to say that this Hall shhh ain't cool and my experiences in it is not cool and for all you new booty's, ya'll really trippin if ya'll think it's cool to come here.

I just got out of the Hall, I was out for several weeks in a group home and I ran 'cause I thought it was cool. Everybody else was doing it, now I'm back in the Hall. But now that I think about it, it was not worth it, now I miss my baby, my family and not all my friends, but a few. Now I got to communicate through paper with them and that ain't cool. But hey, it's like I wanted this to happen.

So, now my consequences are real bad right now. They trying to give me eighteen months in CYA to some ninjas that ain't shhh, but time away from my family, girlfriend, and friends and I'm missing out on a whole lot because of a my ignorance. But it's cool I'm going to get through this! I go to court June 15, 2006 and I just hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Well Beat, I'm out.

-Lil' Meika, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Meika, your facing a very rough time in your life. You seem to have a pretty good attitude about it. Just keep your mind straight about what's important to you — and keep everything in perspective. Eighteen months ain't nothing compared to eighteen years. But like you say, hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

I'm mad it took me this last
time to wake up and see that
they ain't playing
with me no more.

That Time

Well, when I die, it might be by a gun or a knife, but you will never know when you will die. I think about it all the time, 'cause of the environment that I'm living in and 'cause of what I bang. I came close to death a lot of times when I been shot at on the block. I think I always had a guardian angel with me 'cause I always left two to three minutes when it happened.

I just feel that I should've been dead a long time ago. But when I die, it's going to be problems, or rather if I get killed, I know my fam' is going to ride for me — or would they just talk about how I died and how I did a lot of bad stuff when I was living? But I want everyone to have a shirt of me, drink for me and smoke and pop for me, 'cause I'm not out there no more. I wouldn't want people to cry, but I know they would.

And how would it be without me? Well, shhh, it'd be the same but different. I would think about all the people I hurt in my family and things I did to hurt my enemies — but things happen. You feel me? But instead of riding in a hearse, I want a horse to carry me through my spot, and up and down the street. And before we get to the church, I want someone to swing it for me on the corner and pump Mexican music for me, and just remember me as the G that I was.

It won't be the same without me on the block. I know I'm'a be missed. But I do believe in God, so hopefully I get into heaven by saying my sins and asking forgiveness — 'cause I don't want to go to hell. But if it's your time to go, it's your time to go. But me, I know how to stay alive and survive in the streets 'cause that's all I know. But only God knows when it's your turn to be judged. RIP to the fallen homies. We'll see each other again in another lifetime.

-Tui Tui, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see that you have both your own death and life after death on your mind, maybe in the back of your mind all the time. It's not like you have all the answers, but the thoughts keep circulating through your mind, as you say, because of your environment (what you do in the street, too) and what you bang — you are at risk daily. You say you know how to survive, because you say it's all you know (the object of a life-long study, how to survive in the street), but you also know you could get taken out at anytime. So why not try something new? Is that thought really scarier to you than continuing to live like this? Well, the answer is: yes. There is a certain bottom-line comfort in returning to the familiar, however at risk that familiar situation puts you, because you more or less know what to expect and how to handle yourself. It's like "all you know" becomes a habit that keeps you from learning something new, being in a new situation makes you stress, not knowing what to expect or how to handle yourself — and because of the stress, you overreact to small failures and get frustrated and angry, so you rush back to the familiar ways that will one day get you killed or locked away for life. Confessing your sins and contrition is a good thing, but God wants you to correct them — to take the challenge of changing your life. We know you were literally born into it. We remember the story of your birth published in The Beat years ago. That doesn't mean that you have to die the way you were born, or the way you've been living up till now. What about trying to get into the GED class at Camp, and then getting a legal job. It would help get you out of the mix. You won't have to flip drugs to get money. Well, we just don't want to see you die anytime soon. You feel?

Keepin' It Real

Dear Beat, this that boy Ad once again, I'm just here to say I'm gone.

I'm about to start my time and to all my people out there in other Halls do your time, don't let it do you. I have been through all the things you all my have been through and I hate to say, I'm mad it took me this last time to wake up and see that they ain't playing with me no more.

So, to you all out there do yo' thang, forget the block and the fame, it's not gon' be there when you dead or gone and that's real talk. 'Cause when you in here, ain't nobody out there for you. Yo' family and yo' girl gone only be there for you for a certain amount of time, but you always gone have somebody there for you and that's God. So have faith and keep yo head up. I'm out.

-Young Ad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Having faith in yourself is the most important thing. No matter how many people in your life abandon you, don't abandon yourself. You had to learn your lesson the hard way, hopefully others will learn from your example. Keep your head up. You've gained more from this experience than you know.

RIP Vencente Aka Nono

I was crying mid June, because one of my friends got killed on 6/6/06 and on the day I was writing about it in The Beat, saying that one of my friends will get killed or me — on that very day, it happened!

So, when I found out, I was crying the whole night. It ain't that good a feeling when you lose a family member or a friend. I was just with him two and a half months ago, so folks here in the Hall don't know how bad I'm feeling. And I went to court on the twentieth of June and found out that I will be going to CYA — my max is eight years. But I'm thinking I will have to do like eighteen months or two years.

Even so, that's when you have to cry sometime. So RIP Nono, love you; tell RIP Boo Boo one love and watch over me; tell Twin, too, that I am trying to look out after his family.

-Sarillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a heartbreaking life, gangster life, watching your homies die young, and just when you get over the death of one, another homie gets killed. The G Code will have you out trying to kill for kill, till everyone you know is dead or locked away. We learn to live in pain, or every gangster you see would be crying all the time. Instead, it's getting drunk and high and wild, trying not to see that's what perpetuates a so-called life style that's really holding hands with devil, walking down the aisle of his church for no better and a lot worse till death do you part. We mean no disrespect to family or friends, but this way of living your life has got to end — while you're still living. It's not just about forgiving, it's about change to end the cycle of pain.

Why I'm Writing

Once you get out for a little while you start thinking about if you could get away with the next crime. But, as you commit that crime, hella things start running through your mind. But as you get away with it you start to do more and more things. But, a word of advice: Don't let no one tell you what you can't do. All you got to do is set your goals and go for it.

-Lil' Dizil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So we hope your goals are more than just seeing your girl and your family! Seriously, what about a job? What about school? What about probation? What about staying off the block? What about not drinking or smoking? And what about staying away from negative influences? Lil' Dizil, you do offer us readers some great advice, yet we still got a little advice for you: Look around you, consider who is telling you what to do, and if they are concerned with YOUR best interest. And before you set your goals, make sure that you are making productive ones. Consider your priorities in life, rather than gambling with what's most important to you.

Rape Is Bad

To me, rape is the worst crime to commit because a person will live with that for life. A lot of the time people who were raped or molested when they're younger do it to someone else when they get older. I mean, what's the point of raping somebody, is sex really that important? There's enough men and woman in this world for everyone. If you really can't get somebody to have sex with then go and please yourself. Me, personally I would masturbate because sex isn't important to me, at all.

I think a person should do life in jail for raping somebody even if they were on drugs or something when they did it; if you decide to pop that pill, smoke that weed, or etc that's on you. If I ever knew that one of my friends raped somebody then I would lose all contact with that person.

-Iyshawwn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right that the victim of rape has to live with that pain for the rest of their lives, but just to be devil's advocate—how is it worse than actually taking someone's life? Murder is absolute. We so appreciate yet another solid thoughtful piece!

A Prayer

The ardent longing in my life
is not a prayer for me
in the deep watches of the night
I pray not selfishly
I lift eleven lives to you O' God
eleven hearts I know you love
I cannot help them now below
please bless them from above
you see their needs as I cannot
you hear their prayers I know
you feel their tears upon your cheek
please hold them as I go
no woman could love them as I do
no heart could miss them so
but only you can lift their heads
and hold them as I go
give them strength when they are weak
and peace in place of fear
give them eyes of faith
that watch as miracles appear
hold them close in your embrace
the way I know I would
hold them tight in your embrace
the way a father should
be their fortress from the storm
a place where they can hide
a father strong whom they can trust
in you they can have pride
although I cannot touch a face
or hold my loved ones near
or see them in the morning light
or wipe away their tears
or talk with them about their day
or pray with them at night
but I know that you will be with them
you'll be their guiding light
I give them to you lord one by one
my Darell and ten dear stars
please keep them close and love them strong
I'll love them afar
men I dedicate this prayer/poem to all my family
cause this is how I feel about them and this is really
a prayer I say before I go to sleep every night
yours forever...

-Rucker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, this is a really heartfelt piece. Thank you for sharing your prayers with all of us—it's beautiful. The reader can feel how much you care for those eleven hearts.

smiles

I fake smile all the time. There's usually no spite or malice behind it, it's just easier, easier to get by, get people off your back. You tell 'em you're fine, and show 'em your pearls. Inside, you feel like shhh.

You might be angry, sad, hurt, depressed, scared, uncertain, worried... Sometimes it's just easier to smile in ways more than one. Smiling can help you feel better by using opposite action. Or, it can get people off your back.

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We appreciate this for its honesty, Slug. We think a lot more people do the same as you but just don't like to admit it. We know we do. But still, you have to worry that if you get a reputation for fake smiling, people begin to distrust you, so you have to find a balance.

Even Granny's Go Hyphy!

Goin' dumb stupid, hyphy, is another way of partying and having fun. Having fun like in the Bay Area is another way of going dumb, chilling with folks and even family. Going stupid is a way you feel on the outside that's wild, crazy and bossy, doing things in a different matter.

Going hyphy is girls and boys having hair more like dreads shaking everywhere, and even afros, 'cause you know: even granny's got to feel they self on some special event. Dumb, stupid, hyphy is cool for some, but a lot of people don't know how to handle it. They want to do extra stuff like pop pills, smoke weed, drank liquor and even commit crimes and other stuff -- which dumb, stupid, hyphy is not about. It's about doing your thing, not what other people are doing 'cause that makes you a person that you really not.

So be yourself and love yourself.

-Frog, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for breaking down hyphy in a way we can understand, and also in a way that shows if you're truly hyphy as you say, you don't need the pills and crazyiness to make it happen. Like you say, even Granny's can do it.

In The Hood

In the hood

On the block in my white T

Thought it was all good

To jump out that car and

Messed up my Nikes

'cause I was goin'dumb, stupid and hyphy
now I regret everything I did.

'Cause I learned how to go dumb as a kid
smokin' weed drankin' and poppin' pills
had me thinkin' hyphy was all good and real
don't get me wrong baby, it's hella fun

haters you see goin' dumb and pull out the' gun
best believe I go dumb

I was goin' stupid and gettin' hyphy

All day wit' my potnas

Posted up smokin' purple weed

Ridin' in the car thizzin' off an E'

Because I was getting' hyphy

Goin' dumb stupid hyphy

Goin' dumber off Hennessey

'Cause all my ninjas go dumb stupid hyphy

Think about it in you mind, and tell me what you see

-Ally-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't tell from this poem whether or not you're saying that you regret this lifestyle or not. It's almost like you start off saying you regret it, but then when you get to the end of the poem, you're all caught up in everything about it that you used to like. Which is it, pro or con? To quote from you're terrific last line, "tell us what you see."

Drugs

Drugs lead me to places I never want to be

Drugs lead me to places I wouldn't stay

Drugs cost me more than I was willing to pay

Drugs lead me to emotions I was never at

Drugs lead me to hit that pipe just like baseball bat

Drugs lead me to things I thought I would never do

Drugs lead me to people I thought was true

Drugs lead me to looking older than I am

Drugs lead me to meet different homeboys, man.

Drugs are messed up!

-Lil' Payasa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Knowing all this, we not only expect you to stay sober, we expect you to be a role model and teacher that can help those coming up behind you from going down the path that leads here. Good for you!

My Emotions

Right now I feel very emotional because I came back to the hall when I said I wasn't going to come back. I've hurt my parents once more and that hurts me a lot.

I was doing good when I got out, because I was getting along better with my dad, plus, he met my boyfriend, Juanito! He was ok with us being together, because he could tell how much we care about each other, but I messed up and here I am again, and I know my parents are hurting.

I hope that this time helps me change and realize not to take my parents for granted.

When I'm in my room I cry because I miss my parents and my boyfriend Juanito. I pray to God that this will be my last time in the hall and I pray for Him to make me strong to live everyday here and I just pray that all of the other girls are doing ok.

I'll be out soon and I'm gonna do my best to stay outta trouble. This isn't the life I wanna live. I don't want to be coming in and out of jail, it's just not who I am. I know I'm a good person and I can do good so I'm really going to try with the help and support of family and God and of course the love of my life Juanito!

I want to make my parents happy and not hurt them and myself anymore. So when I get out I'm doing my best to stay out... Well I'm going to stop writing before I start crying...

Thank you God for always being here when I need you. I love you! I love my mom and dad, Rosa and Manuel. I love my babie Juanito. Juanito and Margarita.

-Maggie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry you're back, but hope that you can take the experience and learn from it. That's something only you can control, but at least you have the support of your family and your boyfriend. Good luck!

If and When I Die

if and when i die

i hope i go out a legend

i hope maybe i could make it

outta the path of hell

and one day see the gates of heaven

whatever happens

when i die won't ever be reincarnation

so what's the point of changin'

forget switchin'

how i'm livin'

There's only a few things that can happen when you die.

You can go to heaven, hell or be stuck here searching for the afterlife. People do good and pray to make it to heaven. Some people mess around and go to hell, but no matter what (like The Game say):

"you dead when that green line go flat

if you could start yo' life from scratch

you couldn't change that

and no matter what you never comin' back"

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Switch your life around while you're still living above the ground, 'cause whatever happens later or doesn't — this life is real, so don't punk it. It's your choice to put yourself behind bars or passing time in the Camp's yard, and don't say next time you'll be more slick — 'cause the state pen' is full of men who were so sick wit' it they could they could get slick wit' it but all they did was get dicked wit' it. If you want to make it as a rapper, fine! But don't waste your life before you hit flatline. (And if there is reincarnation, it's not like you get a choice in your next station; karma says you earn where you go, the worse you do here and now, the lower your spirit goes next time 'round. Hindus believe your body rots but your spirit does not, and you might be reborn as a worm in dirt if you don't do right in your human birth during incarnation here on earth. We're not saying it's true, but just so you know — you don't get to choose after you're dead, you're making your choice by the life that you've led.)

Why Did You Have To Leave Me All Alone?

Why did you have to leave me all alone
In this cold and broken world with no heart to call home?
Baby, I loved you but now you're gone.
I know it was only a year but it felt like so long.
Even though it has only been a year,
I'll still be loving you 'till my dying day gets here.
But until it does, I ask that you stay close to me,
In my heart where you're supposed to be.
I'll be longing for your touch for the rest of my life,
Thinking of all the times you told me I'd be your wife.
I lost two precious lives on June 6th, 2006,
And my broken heart no one can ever fix.
Asa, baby, you'll truly be missed!
Rest in paradise
I LOVE YOU.

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are so sorry, April. Even though you feel like your broken heart will never be fixed, time has a mysterious way of keeping those we love alive in us while slowly taking away the pain. Keep writing and expressing your emotions. That's also part of healing.

Is It Okay To Cry?

Crying is a physical or mental hurt
Like seeing friends or love ones in the back of a hearse
It's a burst
From deep within
Like a young boy
Losing his best friend
Or a girl losing the pureness of a virgin
It's curtains
No more hidin' shame
Cause you can't hide
What's in your heart
A lot of ninjas say they don't cry
But they some marks
No matter how it start
It always ends
So just remember it's alright to cry my friend.

-Lil' Tank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece, Lil' Tank. Crying is an emotional outburst. When there are no other appropriate reactions, crying is always there.

You Couldn't Last a Day in My Life.

What's up Beat, this Lil' Looney comin' at you from Max. I was raised in the hood, where the OG's laced me up on game. Since I was ten years old I was on the block. You couldn't last a day in my life.

I want to send my love to those who are doing time in the pintas. The way I look at it you got to shake the fake and deal with the real.

Ninjas haven't seen the shhh I seen in my hood: I seen drive-by's, I seen homies in my hood get stuck, and my ninja got ran over by some rivals in the hood. I seen Mothers crying but that's just the way we were raised in the town of bloody stains. I seen loved ones get put under dirt -- and that shh hurts.

I want to say Rest in Peace to my homie, Speedy and my homie Johnny and my homie Arturo, but that's it for now Beat, till pencil meets paper. Alrato Beat.

-Looney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe you. Most of us couldn't last a day in your hood. The problem is, most of YOU can't last long either. Too many people cut down, as you say, too much strife, too much killing, too many mothers crying. Tell us more about what you see each day on the streets. Do you think this is the way the hood has to be, do you think this is the life you have to live? You are the expert in this, you are the one who can explain this life to the world, to The Beat, to all of us who don't have your day to day experience. So get to work: write! And teach!

My Thoughts Of The Day

Today is my saddest birthday I ever had. This pains my head that I can't do anything I want. I would love to just go kick it with my families and homies, but no, these mother effers got me locked up in this sucky ass 6x6 foot cell.

I want to go have a fat ass party. I don't really effing care because I get out in a week. I won't be here next time you come.

Anyways this is the worst birthday I have ever had. I get depressed thinking about it and would rather just put my head under my pillow and forget I even existed. That thought has me thinking, if I never existed, would my family be this disoriented? I would rather sit on my cell block and sing to myself. But I don't really because it would make me look like a crazy ass lunatic.

The thoughts that flow through my mind are like the flow of wind through a green garden in a warm spring day. The thing I think, the terrible pain I get even trying to think of my life makes me feel like an innocent deer being devoured whole by a savage mountain lion. The best thing and the only thing I can do is lay back and let my mind run wild and drift off into time.

-Robert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your family would be totally different if you had never existed, but you do exist, and they love and need you. Though you are away from them physically, we know they think about you every day, every moment, wishing for your safety. So when you get out, and you're faced with hard decisions - think about this moment of despair and make the decision that favors freedom, and you'll have a long lifetime of fun birthdays.

Like My Second House

What's up to all who are reading these lines. I hope you are all doing good. Me, I'm here waiting for my court in a few days to see what the DA is going to do with me. I'm hoping to not get much time, but if I do, screw it, what can I do? That's what it's all about when you don't follow the rules.

Well, I try to stay out of trouble, but this place is like my second house. Since I started coming here, I've always been coming back and I've always said this to myself and to my homies: "aquí estamos y no nos vamos porque si nos vamos alrato" regresamos (Here we are and if we leave we come back later) The only time you're not coming back is when you change everything. But it's hard for many of us to do. We're just kicking it with our homies here and doing our time. But sometimes stuff comes up and it's hard to back down from it. If you are a homie of mine, you know what time it is. I don't have to say it.

Well, I'm going to stop writing now. Take care and be trucha. Little Brown Boy will be back home after I'm done with my time. Alrato, and take care.

-Francesco, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a beautiful and a heart breaking piece. We know you're trying and we know you're speaking to us from a deep and sincere place. We hope you will try hard to train yourself to think before you act. You can't help the people you love, you can't enjoy freedom even, unless you teach yourself to stop and think before you act. Stop and ask yourself, out loud if necessary, if the action you are about to take is best for you and those you love. Will your action lead to sorrow and unhappiness? What are the likely consequences? These are questions you must train yourself to ask when a 'situation' arises. Most of the time, we go about our days without having to ask these kinds of questions. We breathe, we say hello to people, we work, we eat, etc. But sometimes, as you say in your piece, stuff comes up. That's when you need to stop and ask yourself the important questions. Please, train yourself to do that.

My Thoughts

Well, the thoughts that go through my head are when I'm in my room.

I don't have no books, so I stare at the wall and think. I think about girls, because it might be a long time before I see a good looking girl again.

I think about my familia and how I'm not there for them when I should be.

I think about the money I could be making.

I have other thoughts, but I'd rather not put them on paper.

I just need to get out and go to my town.

-Thinking Freedom, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: The mind rarely stops thinking, though often what it's doing isn't very deep thinking. Your mind is part of you. It doesn't rule you, unless you let it. You need to train your mind to work for you. Command it to come up with a strategy that will return your freedom to you, that will allow you to "be there" for your family, that will get you that good job you want. Make your mind work for you. If you don't train it, it will put you in constant jeopardy. Remember, it works for you, not you for it.

Normal Teenager

What it do Beat? This ya' boy young BJ up in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. I'm hella juiced cause I'm bout to get released on the 29th., next Friday.

Instead of sending me to another group home they're going to give me a straight release and transfer my probation to Co Co (Contra Costa) County. My dad just bought a house in Richmond so I'm no longer a resident of this county. So, they going to release me. I'm glad, 'cause I'm tired of being locked up and in group homes and on the run. I'm ready to just be a normal teenager while I still can before I become an adult. I'm ready to get off probation and live the rest of my freely.

To my baby mama, Tah-Tah, I love you baby and I'll see you when I get home. All right then Beat, I'm out.

-Young Bj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece Young BJ. Take this chance as an opportunity to get your life straight. You are a lucky guy. Make us/you and your family proud. Good luck with your new life. Peace out.

Determining A Real Smile From One That Is Fake (To My Mother)

I think everyone knows a real smile from one that's fake and hurtful. I can feel a smile that is fake. You can tell also because of the eyes, the facial expressions. Or who knows, maybe you're tired since August.

The first time I ended up in juvenile, everything changed. I don't know... lately I've started to understand how you feel - overwhelmed. No matter what, your smile will always remain the same in my heart. I love you mom.

-George, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is good George. Keep trying to understand what others feel. That's called empathy and it's the first cousin of compassion, a quality that makes life better for everyone.

I'm Thinking

What up Beat! This Lil' Marquitos coming at you from this unit. I've been here for about a month and a week or so.

As my days grow, I keep my mentality growing solid! As for my homeboys doing time... keep yo' heads up and remain strong.

A topic I would like to make is one of my thoughts/dreams that I've been wanting to bring up. The topic is; if you had your main carnals with you to build a foundation, what would it be?

Well, my foundation would consist on wisdom for homeboys to gain a monthly salary that would get us eating right.

I'm not talking 'bout robbin' fools or hittin' licks. I'm talking bout making legit money off of business. Doing positive things to help each other out, mentally and physically. You just gotta maintain moving around and selling hats and our clothing. We represent to the fullest, but we want to get money our way too.

It would be called the Game Plan Foundation. We gonna grow as much as we can. We already connected bay area wide. Though... it's gotta happen some day to come up as our generations struggled to make it. I got full support for this as I do for myself. One love.

-Lil' Marquitos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some real talk and something we fully encourage. Tell us how wisdom for homeboys would gain a salary! Do you mean they get the wisdom (like from schooling) to see that there is a better life out there than banging? It's a little confusing when you speak about moving around selling hats and clothing. And how do you get money your way? What way? We think everyone want to gain wisdom and make money. Yet, it's nice to hear someone planning a proactive project, because if you want to move up sometimes you have to give yourself the first push. And the problem with illegal money-making schemes is that they usually just lead you back to jail. Your initial plan is impressive and we sincerely hope you follow through and make it happen for all those deserving. Good luck!

Hyphy's New to the World, But Not to Us

What it do Beat? This ya boy, and today I'm going to write about going stupid, dumb and hyphy. Going dumb and getting hyphy is a way of life. Hyphy means a lot of things, like getting' active with somebody, or it could mean going dumb, like dancing a certain way, you dippin' your car a certain way. It's not a movement 'cause it's a way of life.

Don't get it twisted, hyphy could mean like people shaking their dreads swinging your scrap thing. It seems like some people is new to this hyphy shhh, but people like for example OG's been doing it before most of our time, so it ain' like this is new.

It's just new to the world. In the Bay Area we been doing this shhh for years! This aint new. Peace, one love and whoever reads this, keep it solid own some solid shhh.

-Mitchell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good point. Fashions and trends are here today, gone tomorrow, what makes a culture important is the stuff that came before it got famous, and will stick around long after the fame dies away.

I'm tired of being locked up and in group homes and on the run.
I'm ready to just be a normal teenager

Is He?

Is he gonna cheat if he gets out first?
 If you gonna cheat jus let me know
 so I wont be sitting here looking like a dumb ho
 I don't do cheaters because it make no sense
 why wait on you if you with the next witch
 excuse my language but I'm just saying
 are we really in love or is you just playing
 you should already know what's up
 because I'm as loyal as they come
 its too late to take back what's already said and done
 boy I'll give you my all if that's what it takes
 just to let you know that I love you
 and this love ain't fake

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you have to worry about him cheating if he gets out first is he really what you want? We know there is almost always a little fear of that sort of thing, but we hope your worry is unfounded.

This Love

Never thought the day would come
 where I'd say "I love you"
 and mean it
 but "Chris I love you"
 you've heard and seen it
 you started off as work
 then became my boo
 now you're my man
 my one and only
 never knew I could be faithful
 and not feel lonely
 you take the place of all the other dudes
 and you doing a better job times two
 if I would've knew it was going to be like this
 I wouldn't have thought twice about letting him go but it
 happened for a reason
 and we have our love to show
 I don't know how but I fell for you ASAP
 I can't wait until we get married,
 sign the papers, and it be a wrap
 Just know that I love you, for real,
 even if you catch another dirty for popping a pill. (Naw,
 don't do that again, Dummy)

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope it works out for you and your loved one. Good luck.

Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy Ain't Shhh

It don't really mean nothing to me. I don't be into all that trying to go dumb and stuff because all it's going to do is get me into trouble.

I used to be into all that hyphy stuff last year, but I started seeing how much trouble it was getting me in, so I was like, "Damn I really need to change, now I'm living and stepped up my game."

Going to parties and hanging out all day ain't the spirit no more. Being on the run and doing hella stupid stuff is not the way to be living, that's why I turned myself in, I think the main reason why people be wanting to go dumb and do hella stupid stuff is because all these songs pumping they heads up.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Solid piece. We're glad you figured out that that life isn't for you—some people don't realize it until it's too late. We agree that so much of the mainstream music out there glorifies a really harmful lifestyle for young people. What do you think we could do about that?



Kalei

Yeah, I know you probably typing this while I'm in my room ringing my buzzer because I gotta piss.

I know you out there holdin' it down for me while I'm in the hall staying solid for the team

I know you better be writing me a letter.

When you receive mail it makes you feel better. Anyways, how you doing out there?

You already know I'm in here hoping my freedom is near.

I know you think you going dumb while I'm in here waiting for visiting so that my mom can come.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope your cousin Kalei gets to read your piece, and you are also planning on how to live your life free of incarceration and probation. What's your plan to staying out?

you should already know what's up
 because I'm as loyal as they come
 its too late to take back what's
 already said and done boy I'll give
 you my all if that's what it takes

One Special Talent

If I had to choose one special talent, I would pick writing. I like to write, and it makes all of the bad things come out of my head, because otherwise I keep everything to myself.

That is why I get into trouble a lot. I let things get to me. I should not let the thing get to me, because then I would not be in jail. I hope when I get out, I will not come back. So that is why I like to write. I relieve a lot of stress and get things off my mind.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As far as we're concerned, you've already chosen to display your talent for writing — 'cause we read you every week in our pages! And we're glad it helps you stay under control and make better decisions. Keep writing us when you get out!

I Feel Good! James Brown, Mac Dre and T-Mac

If I could have dinner with somebody famous, it would be James Brown. I like him, and my grandpa before he died liked him. We'd always listen to his music all day and night when I was twelve or thirteen. James Brown, the Godfather of Soul! That is why I listen to the radio now, because of him. I love to listen to "The Best of James Brown."

If I could have dinner with somebody who is dead now, it would be Mac Dre, because he is cool. He can rap good, and his songs slap! They tell you the truth. They killed Mac Dre because they was jealous of him. They decided they would kill him just because they didn't have no money like him or a squad like him.

If I could have dinner with anyone from the world of sports, it would be T-Mac, because I could learn a lot about basketball! He plays for the Rockets, and he's getting a lot of money for going to the NBA. That is where I am going to go. Then I can buy my grandma a big house and car so she can be happy.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's quite a trio of stars — two from the music industry and an NBA all-star! They all cast large shadows. We can imagine your picture in all the magazines as the winner of the "Have dinner with someone famous, someone dead and someone in sports" contest! Bringing Mac Dre back would take some doing though. Maybe it's better not to make enemies over the size of your squad. Do you think his being so involved with illegal drugs, had to something to do with how he died?

What Bothers Me

What bothers me is when somebody say a lot of stupid things to me that I don't like, and when people think they are punkin' me. I hate that stuff! A lot of the think they hard, but they not. They is some punks. They talk a lot of stuff, but they can't back it up. That bothers me a lot.

I try to do good, but somebody mess that up and make my flip out. They will meet the bad side of Demetrus. If that is how they want to meet, I will let them, because that will make that person mess them up and he will go off on him — but I try not to! But the comments they say to me, I will be all ready to fight them, because they know not to mess with me — and that is what I got to say to any person that want to get messed up.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We get so many pieces just like this, because there are so many fools at Camp saying things just to get the next person mad. But whether or not they can back it up, isn't the point, because you don't want it to come to that. You say you don't want to fight. Hold on to that. Don't let these fools make you do anything you don't want to do! Don't give them that much power over you. Let's say you win the fight. Then you get sent back to the Hall. Not much of a victory. Victory is rising above!

Things I'm Scared Of

I am scared to be in jail, because people will make you mad, and then you will fight! And another thing I would be scared of would be to see someone in my family killed, because that could make me mad enough to go out and kill someone.

Another thing is: My dad wants me to move in with him, but I am scared to leave my grandmother. I am not trying to get in trouble with my dad, and I like to be with him on the weekend, but I am going to stick with my grandmother. She has taken care of me all of my life.

When I got hit by a car, she was there for me. They said that I could have died, but she gave me good luck. I had got my teeth pushed back up into my gums, and they said I would never see my teeth again. Well, I am just so grateful to be here today, and that is why I love my grandmother the most — and my great grandmother.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it wasn't your temper that got you locked up this time, but it sounds like your temper is what you are (or should be) most scared of. Whether it's getting into a fight because someone said or did something to make you mad — or rushing out crazed with grief to kill the killer of your family member — your temper seems to blind you and take away both your thoughtfulness and your self-control. God forbid anyone ever killed any of your family members, but would it help the others to have you locked up for life. Let the courts handle justice, and you be there alive and free to care for your family.

Things That Make My Heart Beat Fast

What make my heart Beat faster, is when I do a lot of running — my heart beat fast. Then when I fight, my heart beat fast because I am swinging, and that is another thing that make my heart beat fast.

When somebody get hurt in my family, it will feel like my heart will come out of my body. I don't like to see nobody get hurt. Another thing is getting stopped by the police. It make me feel like I done something wrong, but I did not! So that's another thing.

When I have not seen somebody in a long time, my heart will beat fast. Another thing is when I see my girlfriend get happy, and my heart will beat real fast because I have her and I don't want to lose her to nobody! I love her a lot.

These are the things that make my heart beat. And some is important to me. So I can't help it. Like when I see somebody off or leave someone, I get a big heart beat.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got a big heart there inside your chest, full of feelings, and when they get stirred, your heart pounds! You know, the things that get your heart beating with anger? Sometimes exercise can work off that feeling, 'cause they both make your heart beat — but the exercise releases you from that heart-pounding urge to do something in anger. First exercise makes your heart beat faster, and then, when you're done, after a little while, you feel calmer.

Lying to Your Parents

I will lie to my parents so I won't get in no trouble, because I hate getting in trouble. They take my phone and I will be on punishment for like six or seven months!

But when I get in trouble, I get sent to the Hall, because they say they is not putting up with my shhh. But I am not a bad person. I do not belong in Camp Sweeney. I should be at home with my grandma, because I did not do nothing wrong to be in here. But they don't care about me like some people, but I am not tripping.

I love my grandma, and she love me. And she take care of me. That is the person that I will not lie to — my grandma! Because I love her the most out of all the people that is in my family. So, my grandma is the number one person in my heart.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is simpler to decide simply to do right, than to try not to get in trouble. We understand what you're saying, because being punished is no fun — and being separated from your family in a county facility is no fun — and that happens when you're family won't take you back after some incident or other. Your story about picking up an iPod off the ground where someone else dropped it and then getting arrested, is a case of being punished though you did nothing wrong. It's a hard thing to do, but just keep trying to do right, no matter what. Like you do for your grandma.

It's In My Blood

Yes, it is in my blood. Pimpin' and hustlin' is a thing to do. Most of my people did it, and I am going to do it whenever I get broke. But then I am a hustler because I am making money doing that and hustlin' — but regardless, I will make money, so I am not trippin'. I will sell things till I make all the money in the world.

And another thing that run in my family is drinking. We always drink on the weekend. That is a bad thing to do, but we do. And another thing we in my family get sick a lot. I don't know why, but we do. I will follow my grandpa' footsteps. I will be sharp just like him, and I won't take no shhh from nobody. That is how he was; that is how I am going to be.

Smoking weed, that is in my blood, because people in my family smoke. But 75% that are in my family smoke it to keep their blood pressure down. Another thing is just being me, I will be a leader, not a follower. And I will do right, not wrong. I will go to heaven, not hell. It's in my blood.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, there are plenty of legal hustles — hustling to make money is a good thing. It's the American way. But pimping is all bad, and we notice you don't mention that you do it. Good for you. Drinking in excess is a bad thing. It's bad for your body and makes you stupid and irresponsible. But drinking in moderation on weekends, if you can do it, is not a bad thing, when you're an adult. As for smoking weed to lower blood pressure, well, we'd like to see some studies on it — but our government is so entrenched against any use of that drug that studies are discouraged either openly or through refusing funding. If it was found to be helpful, then your family members could take pills with the active ingredient in marijuana, and not get all those pollutants and/or irritants into their lungs — smoke is smoke.

I will be a leader, not a follower. And I will
do right, not wrong. I will go to heaven, not
hell. It's in my blood.

We

Like a bright red rose, a ray of light
A newborn baby with a smile so bright
A walk in the tall green grass of earth
The feeling of heat for all it's worth
You're my tree of life, you're hope to my
dreams

Blue sky, crystal tears; baby, you're my queen
Billowing white clouds and soaring through
space

Take a trip to my emotions; let's have a race
First one to happiness gets a kiss on the
cheek

Too many pleasures make my heart beat weak
When I see you on the outs, we'll have a good
time

You bring your cash and I'll bring mine
We will buy a bottle of jack and get perked
Take out my pipe and smoke that purp
Believe me, we will have some serious fun
And we'll be better friends when we are done

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Sounds like fun on a hot summer day, Dominic. You're almost free again, and we wish you huge happiness. What are your plans? We hope you soon have many beautiful summer days, but why don't you stay away from the pipe and the purp? Won't you already be high on freedom? And you don't need to do anything that might bring you back to jury, or worse, to YA.

Get Hyphy, Go Dumb, Get Stupid

In the Bay, we get hyphy because people in the Bay think they hard — but they not! That is why a lot of people get killed, because they get hyphy with the wrong people and they get hurt. That is for hyphy people.

Go dumb is a thing to do in East Oakland on Friday and Saturday, 'cause people is get drunk, and a lot of people taking thizz pills so they can be "on one". Then they talk to a lot of girls on them days — because we go dumb!

Get stupid! That is another thing to do. When we in a car, we hang out the door and the sun roof, and we be on top of the hood, and we gon' ride the whip while we hang out the sun roof. When they see that, they go dumb and go stupid, and we get hyphy in Oakland and around the Bay.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So one kind of hyphy is sort of aggressive in someone's face, like ready to fight, saying things and flying at someone, right? And another kind is just acting wild and crazy, kind of dancing and screaming and acting out of control, right? It's almost like one is being out of control and the other acting like it. Or is it that acting like it can lead to really losing all control? But you don't mean that's how people are getting killed, do you?

Which side?

Just give it a rest and the rest will play itself
Let loose your inhibitions and all your sadistic intentions
Nullify any thoughts or emotions that you may have
Leave your awareness and limitation to your breath
Close your eyes and engrave a mental mantra on a mental tomb
Emblazon the word "I can" on one side
And on the other, "I can, but I won't"
Now take the tomb, whichever color it may be
And throw it high in the air
Watch it spin and rotate
Now, in your mind
Watch it land
What side did it land on?

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: What's a mental tomb, Dominic? Some kind of receptor that dead ends thought? When you tried your own experiment with "I can" and "I can, but I won't," which side landed up? What happens if the tomb slab lands on its narrow side, with the two flat sides facing opposite directions, exposing both possibilities? What happens if you add, "I can't" and "I can't and I won't" to the mix?

Blow Me Away But Don't Waste My Time

Blow me away with your expert photography
Blow me away with your heart-wrenching poetry
Blow me away and show me self-mutilation on your arms
Blow me away; tell me stories about past boyfriends
Blow me away with your professional S and M gear
Blow me away when you sing like an angel
Blow me away as you flatter me with compliments
Some might think these things are great
But blow me away and excuse me, because I don't
So don't waste your energy with showing me pictures
Don't waste your breath reciting your words
Don't waste shock value; I don't care about cuts
Don't waste my time about your abusive exes
Don't waste your voice on someone who doesn't care
Don't waste your compliments if they're not sincere
Don't waste my time
Just don't

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: What if the person offering what they consider the most precious treasures they have to you is sincere? And even in someone starts out being insincere with you, has it ever happened that you affect him/her so profoundly that he or she ends up really liking you and being truly affectionate, and you have transformed that person into a righteous friend? The nature of emotions is that they're always changing—so when in doubt as to someone's sincerity—why not give that person a chance? If not, you might miss out on some profound fun.

The Life Of A Ghetto Prince

It all started in August 13, 1988. Mom was visiting family in her native Kingston, Jamaica. At about 10:00 p-m she went into labor and my Uncle Jonny drove my mom to the hospital. She was in labor for about 8 hours and I was born August 14, 1988 at about 6:00 a-m. My Auntie Laura named me Jovan Marcell because my two cousins who were born just two days before me were named Jovan and Marcell. My twin sister was born thirty minutes before me and was named Ashlei after my Auntie.

So after a week my mom left back home and I stayed with my aunt and uncle in Kingston. My mom was still trying to get on her feet in the States, so my aunt and uncle agreed to keep me and my sister for six months. So after six months my mom came back and got me and my sister.

We lived in San Jose for about eight years, but then my mom got hooked on drugs and started prostituting so CPS took me and my three brothers and my two sisters. We were all in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall until they found foster homes for us. They split the six of us up. One brother lived with a family in Oakland, two lived in San Jose, my two sisters lived in Santa Clara, and I went to live with a family in East Menlo Park.

My mom was in and out of jail until I was about 10. Then she got her life together and moved to The Gardens (an area of EPA known as "Da G" or "G-Town"). She got all of her kids back. I lived in "Da G" ever since (until I moved to The Village, another area of EPA at 16. I'll go more into that in Part 2).

I started kickin' it with my boys: Husky, Tee Wee, August, Armand, Mondo, Jermain, Lil' Hal, Tion, Shad, Freddie Kid, Manny, David, my Lil' Brah Pookie and my homegirls Cindy and Erica. We started a little clique and started runnin' wild. (We were not really a gang. We just all kicked it together. Never did we go around hurting people or bangin' colors or start set trippin'.) Most of us were rappers. We would all record at Mondo's house.

After a while a lot of us started moving out of East Palo Alto. Jermain and Lil' Hal moved to Hayward. Tion moved to Atlanta. David moved to Fresno and Husky moved to LA with his dad. Oh yeah, I did live in Daly City for six months when my mom sent me to live with my aunt. That's when I really started to run wild. I went to a school in So. San Francisco called Alta Loma and it wasn't crackin' at all, so I started not going and they kicked me out. Then I went to a school in Daly City called Ben Franklin. Now that was my kind of school. I had hella fun there. It was me, my boy Peabo from EPA, my boy Smokey from South City and a white boy named Jon from San Mateo. I had to keep Jon around because he was hella funny. He was the only one out of the four of us who was from an upper class family, so we told him that if he wanted to kick in with us he couldn't walk around calling himself Jon, so we named him Jon Jon.

I remember one day me and Peabo was eyeing these females talking to their boyfriends. Peabo was like, "Let's get at 'em Rogue." So I'm like, "Let's go." So we walked over to them and I said to the thickest one, "What's up Mami! Como estas?" She started smiling and was like, "My name is..., but this is my boyfriend." I looked at him and looked back at her and was like, "Well me and my compadre, Senor Peabo would like to know why are some fine-ass females like ya'll not with some cute-ass rogues like us?" Then all hell broke loose. The boyfriends stepped up and I punched one in the jaw and his boys started hitting me in my face. Peabo's big ass just started grabbing ninjas and throwing 'em. Teachers came and broke it up and called the police and the police booked me in Hillcrest...

(to be continued)

-Young Royal

From The Beat: First, we have to give you major props for introducing us to your young life so well. Even though we know we know you left out a lot of the details, we still get a picture of what your younger years were like. So what we want to know is where did you learn to write so well? We may just have to wait for the continuation of this piece to find out if and when you ever took school seriously enough to learn how to take your thoughts, organize them, and then put them down so clearly. In any case, we're eagerly waiting for more.

Scars Only I Can See

You won't see any scars if you look at me. I have scars, but they're not the kind you get from fights and accidents. My scars are memories of the horrible things I've been through, like my mom having cancer, or my friends betraying me, or realizing that deep down inside I have no place in society.

These scars used to be open wounds, bleeding profusely and prone to infection. They could have turned into gangrene, eating away at my flesh and slowly killing me. But I mended those wounds. No matter how bad things got, there were still people there to help me. Time passed and the wounds closed up, turned into scars. The scars don't hurt, but looking at them reminds me of how much they hurt in the past.

Having lots of wounds shows you that you are a victim. Having lots of scars shows that you overcame pain, and that you are strong.

-Scientist

From The Beat: You expose some profound thoughts in this piece — and some very sad ones (like feeling that you have no place in society). Was it time alone that caused your open wounds to heal over into scars, or did you do something to stop the bleeding? Why do you feel so different from others that you don't feel you belong? Where do you see yourself in a year's time? Five years?

This Place

So many things are going on in this place and I just don't know what to do. I feel like shhh in this place with no money and no girls. It just sucks bein' in this nasty place.

-Tito

From The Beat: This place is not designed to make you comfortable, Tito, it's designed to make you never come back! So, what are you planning to change about your life so that you don't have to experience this "nasty place" ever again?

Mental Scars

Every mental scar has a story behind it. Many of us have at least one or two of these scars that are invisible to the naked eye. But many of us also have visible scars that hurt us, but we use them to impress other people. These mental scars are unknown unless spoken about. I look at this as God's way of reminding us of who we are and where we come from, and to reassure ourselves that we are not better than the next person.

-David

From The Beat: What a great way to analyze those scars, both visible and invisible. We love your conclusion that your mental scars are God's way of reminding you that you are no better than anyone else. And no worse, either.

Scars On My Soul

I have scars on my soul from all the beatings in my life, not only physical beatings, verbal and emotional too. I've seen things you can't imagine. I've heard things you wouldn't believe, an' I've felt things you never thought could be felt. The scars on my soul will never be seen by anyone but me an' the eyes of God. Much love an' respect.

-Angel

From The Beat: It pains us to read that you suffered such violence to body and soul when you were growing up. As you feel more comfortable with these memories, you might rethink your decision not to talk about these scars with anyone but God. Sometimes, unexpressed emotional pain can be like an untreated infection, making your whole system sick.

The Secret

Everything happened so quickly
Or so it seemed

She couldn't comprehend

No one ever taught her

She thought she was strong

She changed her mind

Is this the price to pay for being so innocent?

She spoke

That is difficult

And forgot

Because that was what she was told to do

It broke her heart once she realized what was

really going on

And how she could possibly think it was okay to

forget

Never again, she thought

But you could never tell by just looking at me

-Ladybug

From The Beat: We can only imagine the "secret" at the heart of this sad piece, and we hate what we're imagining! You asked if this was the price to pay for innocence, and we have to say, sadly, that too often it is. The only thing we can say is that the human heart is very resilient, and while it may feel like it's broken, time has a way of mending it. Whenever you feel like putting the details on this skeleton, we are ready.

Invisible Tattoos

It broke my heart

When my mom said I was a black spot in her life

Mentally it tore me apart

'Cause it felt like I was being stabbed with a knife

I started to get confused

'Cause I felt like I was being used

I know she loves me

And there ain't nothing nobody could do

To stop me from loving her too

But I don't think I can forget what she said

Because of the feelings it made

-John

From The Beat: We don't know what led up to your mom's unfortunate description of you, John — and we can only imagine how it must have made you feel — but we do know that sometimes all of us get pushed to say things we later regret, and really don't mean. Have you ever spoken to her directly about this? What would a conversation sound like on this subject?

Flows Of A Hustler

Driftin' on a memory

Thinkin' of how it used to be

Reminiscent on the history

Every single thing I done 'n seen

I'm from a neighborhood

Where task forces stay active

So be careful of what happens

Or you'll be dead up in a casket

Livin' money, driven like a game of Monopoly

Locked up in the system 'cause

I'm hotter than a dog in heat

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Oh yeah, you're a hot dog all right!

It's Amazing

Quarters and halves flip that

It's amazing what the loot will do

Now knockin' hard in a muscle car

Yeah, you see they feelin' you

Now believin' all you needin'

Is a thug queen wit' a thumper or two

My bad... didn't have enough time

To hit you wit' the whole nine

I'm day dreamin' of the life I'm leadin'

-Ya Boy

From The Beat: Well, considering where you are, we can understand why you're day dreaming what you're day dreaming. But we hope you devote some of those dreams to leading a life that takes you away from places like this and not of the things that put you back in.

Changed My Life

My life changed when I got into gangs, when I decided to start fighting because of where I am from. I've always lived in the Bay Area. At first I was just doing it to copy my older cousin. As I grew older, I grew more into a gangsta. I was one of the few youngstas that would actually put it down for my set. I would always wear my color, regardless of where I was. I thought I was that no one or nothing could touch me — till the first time I got jumped. Since then, I was aware of what I got into, but that's the way I am, the way I was raised, and they way I'm gonna be. I will only be myself, and no one will change my personality.

-Victor

From The Beat: Reread what you wrote and think about what it means. You recognize that you got into the gang as a follower (copying your cousin) but grew into your role by doing it. Practice makes perfect. But then you end by announcing that this is your personality and you'll never change! That is of course your choice (it's like choosing to be a prisoner), but don't confuse that choice with leadership. Announcing that you'll never change is like saying you already know everything of importance there is to know in the world, and there can't possibly be anything else that will make you see things differently. But since we are two or three times your age (and more) and are still learning new things that change our outlooks and points of view, we feel that you too will have that experience as life unfolds. That is, if you stay alive long enough for it to unfold...

Depression And Joy

Have you ever been in a situation where you're so depressed all you do is cry? Millions of thoughts are running through your head in a matter of seconds! It's happening throughout San Mateo County to teens, adults and young kids. Juvenile Hall is a punishment. Just because you ask too many questions or look at a staff wrong you can get twenty-four hours, bad court report or clowned on in front of the whole unit.

Juveniles want to truly do good in their heart, but when friends, homeboys, influence you or tell you that you need to do this they go back to their selfish "I'm king and everyone has to respect me" thoughts. I know 'cause I've been there.

-Kenny

From The Beat: We're very impressed with how much you've thought about this, and how well you analyze this depressing place. So tell us, putting your intelligence to work, how would you change the system that responds to juvenile crime? Would there continue to be a juvenile hall? If so, what changes would you make?

Sorry To My Lil' Carnal

Damn, you're just nine years old and here trying to figure out if you're gonna live the same lifestyle like your big sister. Damn mijo, I'm sorry for not being there for you, for running away from home and leavin' you all alone. Sorry for not being here when you needed me. Sorry for showing you my gangsta ways and taking you out with the homies when you were scared. Sorry for letting my parents hit you and sorry for all the promises I broke.

I don't want you to end up locked up like me por un pendejada. I don't want you to become a druggie or a drunk. I don't want you to get shot up for the shhh I've done out in the streets. Dispensa lil' carnal for all the shhh I taught you that I now regret.

I love you Danny, te extrano and neva will I let anybody harm you and that's till the end of time. I'ma try to spend more time with you and hopefully you don't end up like me. I'ma try to change and that's for you.

-Morenita

From The Beat: The saddest thing about this piece is that, while it's clear how much you love your brother and how sincere you are when you promise him that you will not let anyone harm him, you are smart enough to realize that you have already harmed him, even though you didn't mean to. That's one of the worst aspects of going down the road you've been traveling — the young ones who look up to you with love see how to live by how you live. Your words of love and support and crucial, and we know they will mean a lot to him. But even more crucial is the model of your life. If he sees you walking away from the old ways and living your life righteously, then, over time, he will follow. Good luck.

When I Did Drugs

My life changed when I did drugs. They asked me if I wanted some and I just shrugged. I was young and I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to look like a fool in front of the dudes so I started to smoke and then choke.

I started doing all kinds of drugs. I started smoking, drinking, and later on popping pills. I didn't know what to do but I thought it was cool. I regret some of it but what could I do? Sooner or later I was gonna be through. Instead I ended up in Juvenile Hall, lookin' like a fool. And that's when I noticed my life changed, after drugs.

-Anthony

From The Beat: What a shame that your fear of being an outsider — your desire to be accepted — led you down a path that put you here! But we can tell that you not only have a brain, but you use it! If you are addicted to any drug, including alcohol (maybe even especially alcohol), please get help. Addiction is a disease that should be treated as such, but is too often treated as a crime. So the consequences can make all your problems worse. Knowledge is power. You've got the knowledge, now turn it into power to make a better life for yourself.

The Street

The street is shady
The street is what made me
But I love the streets
'cause the streets is what pays me
I peeled so many caps
My friends look at me strangely
It's time to leave
Hollerin' at you
In the next one, Beat

-Moco L

From The Beat: Yes, we can clearly see just how the streets have paid you — with locked doors, dirty draws, cement floors, and endless wars. Wake up before you find yourself in prisons distant shores...

Mi Vida

I was born on March 7, 1991 into this messed up world. Chiquita era un angelita (was a little angel), always at school, always getting good grades. Never did anyone think I was gonna end up this way. Got introduced into las calles y valles (the streets and the valleys), into the gang-banging, the back stabbing and the drug using.

By high school I had a full scholarship to a private school. I went, pero (but) I was so caught up kicking it with the homies y haciendo mi dinero in las calles (making my money in the streets). I dropped out.

Ahora (now) I realize I could have been anything I wanted to be. That school was my future. I had the brains to get in, but I didn't have the brains to make the right decision. Now I don't know what I'ma do. Am I gonna die gang-banging? Or am I gonna get another chance. Well, right now gang-banging is my life and I wouldn't give it up even if I wanted to I couldn't because your enemies won't let you out. Pero por ahorita (but for right now) I'ma try to be the best I can be for my lil' carnal, Daniel 'cause I don't want him to end up in the same road like I did. I love him and that's till the end of time.

-Morenita

From The Beat: Well, of course you had the brains to make the right decision, even though you didn't do it! We know that, because we can see you still have the brains to make the right decisions. But we still don't know if you're going to do it. In fact, you seem to make it clear that you won't change ("I wouldn't give it up even if I wanted to..."). That's why we don't think you are as down for your "lil' carnal, Daniel," as you say you are, because if you were, you would know that he's going to do as you do, and not as you say. So think very carefully about your next steps and decide just what kind of role model you want to be to him. The proof of your commitment will not be expressed in words, but in deeds.

Love Is Blind

Love is blind, and it will take over your mind
What you think is love, it's truly not
You need to evaluate and find
Love is blind

Sometimes love can take your life, it can control your mind

And hide how you feel inside
Be careful when it comes to love
Love is pain, it hurts through your veins
Love is good, love is sad
Love is mad, mostly love is pain

A lot of people don't know when love is there
Because love is blind

It's good when you have a good man by your side
And you ride till you die like Bonnie and Clyde
But think about it, would he do the same for you?
Or would he play you like a fool
Remember, love is blind

-Bg

From The Beat: There is no question that love can blind a person. But as you gain experience, it's easier to see through the fake and phony. But even true love has its ups and downs. Why do you (and others) think that Clyde was a good man to ride alongside Bonnie? They both died very young in a cascade of bullets. We'd rather live a full life, growing old with our children and grandchildren.

My Invisible Scar

One of my invisible tattoos is from a month ago when my mom set me up to get taken away by the police. I had gone to school every day that week, something I hadn't done in a long time. I was feeling good about myself. I got home and saw that one of the daycare moms was on my personal computer. I asked her many times what she was doing, but she didn't answer. She had changed my desktop and moved some of my files. This really pissed me off because my life is on my computer, and I don't think you would like it if someone came and changed your life when you are at school.

So I got on my bike and headed back to my school to play basketball. But half way down the block some cop tried to pull me over. I was pissed so I decided to run. Now my mom doesn't want me anymore and won't even let me call to apologize. This is one of my life's biggest invisible scars.

-George

From The Beat: There are things about this experience which we don't really understand, George. What was that daycare mom re-arranging on your computer? What was that all about, and why wouldn't she answer you? What did she find there that got your mom so pissed at you? The one thing where your own thinking shows a need to mature is in your decision to run. Even though we know you were angry, sometimes the hardest thing any of us can do to be responsible and mature is to turn and face what is chasing us — either mental demons or hot-blooded cops! That's not only to avoid the kind of consequences you're not experiencing, but also to develop adult skills that help us maneuver through life. This scar will become less important as the days go forward, but there are lessons in it that will always be important.

Friends

Friends are hard to find, especially the ones who are real about themselves. Being real about themselves means they are not two-faced, which means one minute you're nice to this person and then the next you're mean to a different person who didn't do nothing to them. There are different kinds of people you don't know and you can't judge them because you don't know them. But people you know really good, you can judge them.

-Michelino

From The Beat: How would you judge yourself, Michelino? Are you a good person? If the answer is yes, what makes you so? If the answer is no, why not?

My Mama

She's my mom and the blood beneath my skin
 She's in the depth of my words
 She's my heart within
 When I heard of the crash I lost all control
 The thought of never seeing my ma was killing my soul
 Your words are my light and to lose my mom
 I would be left in the darkness with nothing in sight
 So ma don't scare me to the death
 Because without you in my life
 I would have nothing left
 My love for you is so hard to express
 It's because it never stops growing
 It's only to progress
 I will love you to the end of time
 I know that you're my moon above and my morning sunshine
 If I could ever speak the words of my heart
 I wouldn't ever have nothing to say
 So I guess for now all I got is I'm sorry
 And Happy Mother's day
 I love you
 Dedicated to Nancie - Ma

-Lil' Leche

From The Beat: What a wonderful and loving tribute to your mother, Lil' Leche. Speaking these words (or writing them) shows the depth of your feelings, but the real test of love is your willingness to make sacrifices, to give up things you like in the interest of those you love. Are you ready to sacrifice some of the things you like to do — but which give the system power over your life — in order to give your loving mother what she wants most?

Together Forever

Seems like yesterday when I met you. We were going to the dentist together and you was checkin' me out and I was too! You have this baby face and this cute smile when I look at you from across the hall. I'm always telling you that I want to be with you. I tell you I like you and I need you. You are younger than me and I still don't care. I can't wait to see you on the outs.

The reason why I tell you I don't want you to talk to nobody is because, yes, I want you to myself. You already know and you said you want me too. I can't stop thinking about you. I never felt this way over a boy. Usually they want me first, but I want you.

Damn, I really miss you. I want you here with me. I know you have to leave, but it isn't goodbye. It's hello until we meet again. Now I'm worrying about how it's gonna be when you're free and I'm still here. Are you gonna wait for me? I miss you. I wanna say I love you but it's too soon. Well, inside I know I do and when I'm out it's me and you, just like you promised me, together forever!

-Kika

From The Beat: This sounds like a fantasy relationship based on very little reality in a very unreal setting (juvenile hall). We hope that when you are out there you will move forward cautiously until you have a firmer basis for a relationship than a cute smile and "words of love, soft and tender." He may prove to be the love of your life, and we hope he does. But freedom has a way of making things look very different than they look while you're a prisoner, so you may have to make some adjustments.

Dear Grandchild

Times have changed and they sure have changed since I was your age. You're gonna need your education now more than it was ever needed. I'm your grandfather and I'm here to give you advice.

You should go to school. It might be corny and it might be boring, but without it you'll be nowhere, making nothing. I'm sure you'll do the right thing after a couple slip-ups, or maybe you won't get no slip-ups and you'll go straight to doing what's right. I hope that's the choice you make because being in jail or in the streets is all the same. Nothing is there to help you in a positive way and some people never learn or don't get enough time to figure it out.

Sincerely,

-David

From The Beat: We hope you are able to give such valuable advice to a future grandchild. We also hope that you will consider this as advice to yourself, because it is never too late to apply wisdom like this to your own life. If you had received such a letter from your grandfather or grandmother when you were smaller, would it have made a difference in the choices you made?

Searchin'

A big city boy
 With broken dreams
 A distorted smile
 Walkin' the streets
 Waitin' for a sign
 From up above
 Lost in time
 Searching for love
 A destiny unknown
 A heart unwhole
 Walking the streets
 Forever alone

-King

From The Beat: Even though you feel so alone right now King, you can't predict that you will be "forever alone." Things have ways of changing at the most unexpected times. These pieces tell us that, despite a childhood you neither deserved nor should have been exposed to, you still have your dreams and hopes and fears. We can't predict your future, but neither can you predict it. So keep those dreams alive, but try getting from here to there one step at a time. If there's anything The Beat can do to help, please ask.

Like everyone else
 I'm just here to help
 I can't do that if I can barely help
 myself

What Do You See?

Look into my eyes
 And tell me what you see
 People say a criminal, a gangsta
 I'm only a human being
 I'm living life just like you
 Why you gotta judge me
 And tell me you act a fool
 I'm not tryin' to hate
 Like everyone else
 I'm just here to help
 I can't do that if I can barely help myself
 But I'm tryin' to change
 Change into a man
 But I can't do that
 While I'm stuck in the can
 But when I get out
 I'ma show up everyone
 I'm going be successful
 And not be the person on the street called
 a bum...

-Justin

From The Beat: You have it within you to be whatever you want to be, Justin, which means that if you are determined to prove the haters wrong, you can succeed. When you ask, "Why you gotta judge me," is the question directed at The Beat, people in general, or the system? If it's the system, it's "got to" judge you because that's its purpose. The system will not stop judging, so your best option for the future is the one you've already chosen: Don't give the system power to judge you in a way that interferes with your freedom to make your own choices for your own future.

My Life, Not Yours

Dear Life
 You caught me off guard
 So living my life
 Became hard
 I became a lot of trouble
 But no one seen me struggle
 You led me on
 To do wrong
 This ain't a song
 And it ain't no rhyme
 This is my life
 And this time
 I want it back
 And that's a fact

-John

From The Beat: The prize — your own life — is there for the taking, John. The "trouble" that you've experienced in life have given you a powerful education into the realities of individual behavior and institutional consequences. If you use the lessons you've learned toward your goal of taking your life back, you will be well on your way towards a productive life, the kind that all of us want for ourselves and our children. Go for it!

In My Room

I sit in my room
 All alone
 Thinking 'bout you and me
 An' how things used to be
 Goin' back to the days
 When it used to be
 You and Me
 Me and You
 I reminisce all them sweet words you said
 to me
 Wishin' that I didn't have to daydream
 'Bout havin' you next to me
 Touchin' and huggin'
 Huggin' and touchin'
 Rememberin' when we used to sit at the
 park
 Stayin' late 'till it got dark
 Makin' sure no vato or no jaina
 Would break us apart
 So remember
 It's You and Me
 Me and You
 'Cause all I got left is
 To sit in ma room
 All alone
 Thinkin' 'bout You and Me..
 Much love an' respect
 I love you

-Brownie and Ms. Grumpy

From The Beat: It makes us kind of sad to think of you reminiscing about such pleasant things from behind locked doors. What are each of your plans for making sure your futures don't involve more lock-ups and sad love poems that draw on the memory of freedom rather than freedom itself?

Dear Life

Dear Life, why you so hard to live?
 Why is everything I want to do so hard?
 Why is love treating me so bad?
 Dear Life, why is this all happening to me?
 Is all this happening for a reason?
 I ask myself these questions
 But I guess one day I will find out, but not now
 I already lost a homie.
 I don't want to lose another one to realize
 That this is my time to change.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: We're sorry about your homie's death. Like you, we hope it doesn't require any more deaths to make you realize that life in general is precious, and that your life in particular is all you've got! We can't answer the questions you pose to life, but we know that the longer you live, the more those questions will be answered. So, what are the changes you're expecting to make?

I hope that's the choice you make because being in jail
 or in the streets is all the same.

Days And Nights

Days and nights
Don't know what to do
I can't sleep, eat, or think
Just da thought of you bein' in my
mind
Makes me wanna cry
Goin' back to dem days
When you used to sit by my side
Tellin' me that you love me
Now that I look at it
You was takin' me for a fool
I can't understand how love can be
so blind
Now I know that
Love is pain
Tellin' me things that weren't true
Makin' sure that things I heard
weren't real
Talkin' 'bout
"Girl, you know it's that he said she
said"

I was dumb enough to believe you
An' for believin' what you said
I'm over here all heartbroken
For believin' w'at you said
Always and forever
-Brownie and Grumpy
From The Beat: Well, the story of broken hearts and shady boys who make false promises to girls is an old one — and a sad one. We don't like to see you broken-hearted, but at the same time, we wish you'd focus some of that emotion on what brings you here so that you won't have to write about love, you can experience it freely. Sad words are no substitute for the real thing.

Losing My Mind

(Dedicated to us)
I wake up every morning in this managed hell
Living my life in this crazy cell
A country room is what I called my home
Thinking about those firme memories every day
Every time I get a phone call my jefa hangs up
I might be thinking like, damn that sucks
I get pictures of my friends
Man, they grow so fast
Have to keep my head up
Can't lose my mind

Chorus:
Losing my mind, mind
I'm in my cell block just doing hard times, times
Losing my mind,
I'm all stood up
Pink up on the main line
Losing my mind

I'm going crazy and loca every day and every night
Losing y mind
They putting more charges against me and that shhh
ain't right right
Losing my mind
Poetry ain't gonna waste my time
Got to keep my head up
Can't lose my mind
Always,

-La' Dreamer

From The Beat: Keeping your sanity in an unnatural environment like Hillcrest can be a real challenge. What do you do to make sure you don't lose your mind? Do you read? (We know you write!) Do you make plans for the freedom that is coming to you? We hope so because the old saying, "A failure to plan is a plan to fail" is too true.

Those Times

We both sit back, relax in this four wall room
With no access to our communication
Reminiscing of those firme tiempos we spent together
Looking back on the time we were about to die
Right next to each other
Holding back some times we can't bring back
Locked up here makes us think forward on our life
Can't understand why this happened to us
Why we can't talk to each other the same way we used to
do

But Tiny, guess what?
I don't care about no PO
I'm still here — well, actually both of us
And now all we do is look at each other and laugh
Of the times we spent with your man Chapin
Love a first sight and my ex — vato Lil' Shadow
It's hard to forget about those firme vatos
Now pay back is here
We are the ones suffering in these messed up cells
Always,
La' Tiny y Lil' Chapin
La Dreamer y Lil' Shadow

-La Tiny y La Dreamer
From The Beat: The two of you collaborate well in poetry that reminisces about love and old times. Our only suggestion is that you put as much energy and attention on looking forward as on looking back. Thinking about and planning for your future is the necessary first step to creating a different future than your past. It's time.

Things I Miss

I really miss my family, my sisters. Especially I wish that I never did what I did. But I did. So I want to go home and lie in my own bed, wear my own clothes, do what my mom tells me to do.

I miss going to school. I want to graduate on stage on June 15, 2006. I want to get out and do the right thing with my life. I don't want to end up back, locked up. I can't wait to go home. I miss all my family very much and I miss my honey bun very much and love everyone.

-Nique

From The Beat: We want you to cut this fine little piece out and tape it to your bedroom or bathroom mirror so that you can read it and remind yourself of what you suffered when you were taken from your family. That way, you won't be tempted to repeat the mistakes of the past.

RIP

It's been over ten-and-a-half-months. But in a lifetime of memories the day I heard you were gone I broke down crying on my knees saying, "Oh Lord, please take me instead, because I feel like I'm already dead." I reminisce this about back in the days, Lil' Guero, when we just kicked it in the barrio with all the homies. It was cool, just watching the jura pass by as we threw up our gang signs. But no, nothing is going to happen 'cause I know you're right by my side.

I remember the first day I met you, homie. We were kickin' it with all the homies and jainas. You were only 16 years old but you looked older. You were proving to everybody that you were down. You always had my respect. Thank you for watching my back and always staying right by my side.

I miss the stories you used to tell me about your life and the jainas and about when you were torcido. I'll always remember you so don't trip. Whenever you were around you got my respect and the homies, too, for the whole neighborhood. You were true, flashing your tats like it was a thing to do. Walking through the barrio all alone you didn't care. You always had it, never needed anyone to help you out. But you helped me out and that's without a doubt.

I love you, dog, eramos dos mocosos (we were two snout-nosed kids) just doing our thing, always cruising in RWC or in MV with the jainas, living our crazy life. Now time knows when I got to go. But I wish we could kick it in the barrio just one more time. Every time I get stressed give me a lil' sign so I won't get depressed. I got a jaina, just to let you know, and not one of those lil' silly jainas. Even though homies go their separate ways I hope you stay by my side till my dying day.

Rest in peace. I'm sorry homie, every night I think about that day and I get a lil' teary. Si supieras lo que isiste Dejastes a tus padres bien tristes no es un chiste es algo enserio caiste al sementerio de los 16 anos nomas por un pano y el barrio que queries tanto. (If you knew what you did, you left your parents very sad. It is not a joke. It is something very serious. You landed in the cemetery at the age of 16 all because of a rag and the 'hood that you love so much.)

Every time you cross my mind tu sabes que me aguito (you know that I get sad). Chale homie I hella miss you. Can someone tell me why my homie had to die? Can someone tell me why I never said goodbye. Someone took you out with a cuete because they were too scared to fight with hands. Homies out there disfruten a sus homies (enjoy being together) before they go. My couple of days with Lil' Guero were tight. I could still hear him say to this day, "Ey, Lil' Stranger, come on out so we could kick it." Homie I'll see you later. I love you. Alrato.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: There is not much we can add to this sad good-bye to a homie. All we can say is that it doesn't have to be this way. It's not part of "the Plan" to bury your friends when you're still a teenager yourself. You can keep Lil' Guero alive in your heart and soul as long as you keep yourself alive in body.

Dear Life

When's all this gonna stop?

Hate, pain, sorrow — when's it gonna be dropped?

It's like I'm stuck in this cycle of hate, pain and sorrow. First I get released then I do something stupid. Then my parents get sad and feel so much pain. I hate it. I miss my mom. I miss my dad. I miss my sisters. I miss my niece. And I miss my boyfriend. It seems like there's nothing out there and all I want is freedom.

-Kit-Cat

From The Beat: If there's nothing out there, what do you want to do with your freedom? No, there is much out there. In fact, there is too much out there, and that is the problem — some of the freedom to choose has led to bad decisions which has led here. If you know this cycle of misbehavior leading to arrest leading to freedom leading to more misbehavior, then what is keeping you from stopping those things that take you away from everything you love? Which do you love more, the illegal things you do that give the system power to take you from your parents, your sisters, your niece and your boyfriend, or the people themselves? The true test of love is how much you're willing to sacrifice.

That Last Argument

Wwwhhaaa! Hillcrest!

DDDEEYAAAMM. that juvie facility.

One day I was at my house watching TV.

Put it on BET and everything was coo'.

Then my mom came out of nowhere and yelled at me hella rude.

She said, "Get your ass up and do something useful"

And I was like blah, blah, blah, whatever — which means

"Forget you! I do what I want to do!"

Wwwhhaaa! Hillcrest!

DDDEEYAAAMM that Juvii facility.

That last argument was very cruel and I laid a finger on her a couple of times.

Yeah, I know I'm a fool. Ha, Ha, Ha. Now tha police comes through

Wwwhhaaa! Hillcrest!

DDDEEYAAAMM that Juvie facility.

I'm sitting here in my room, thinkin' what tha hell did I just do?

Now I got court on tha first and I don't know what's gonna happen.

But my mom comes through to pay me a visit. We are now coo'.

-Hands On My Mom

From The Beat: You can damn this juvenile facility all you want, but that won't keep you out of here. We hope you take what you did seriously. You only have one mother, and she will be part of you and you will be part of her forever. What do you think the consequences of your action should have been? What are you going to do different when you go home?

Sadness

The sadness is I have in me hurts a lot.
I don't like staying in juvenile hall,
it makes me feel very lonely.
I miss everybody that I used to kick it with.
I miss them a lot.

-Scott

From The Beat: Scott, we understand how you feel. This is a transitional time in your life. Look at what has lead up to you coming here, and think about your life. Where do you want it to go? Your actions will determine the outcome of your life. Take this experience as a lesson and move on. Be strong - this chapter of your life will be over soon. Peace.

So Hard

I'm so tired of Juvenile Hall and getting in the Juvenile System.

Why are kids going to prison and killing each other on the streets? Why do we rob people and steal cars...

And wonder why we're in Juvenile Hall?

It's so hard for people to get through life because of the people that is doing bad things.

-Rodney

From The Beat: Rodney, you are asking some really good questions, and you're right, life is hard. The most important questions are the ones directed towards your behavior and your life. Why am I in juvenile hall? What can I do to better myself? How can I overcome the temptations of doing bad things? No one said that life is easy, but it can be rewarding, if you learn to make the right decisions.

Back In The Hall

What it do Beat, this ya' boy Young BJ from San Francisco writing to let ya'll know I'm back in the Hall.

I had a warrant for running from ROP, I was on the run for like two months and then I got caught in downtown San Francisco. I just got transferred in to Alameda County, from San Francisco County. They talking about sending me to another placement. If they do, I ain't gon' run this time, I'm-a ride it out.

I want to give a shout out to my baby mama Tah-Tah for sticking with me through everything and being there for me and giving me her love and support I love you Tah-Tah baby and I'll be home ASAP, to give you all the love I have for you. Aight then y'all, 'till the next time. I'm-a be safe.

-Britton

From The Beat: Britton, the only thing standing between you and Tah-Tah is this next placement. Ride it out this time, you can do it. Do it for her. And when you get out, definitely be there for your family, but also take some big steps in bettering our life, like getting into some type of schooling, find a trade, get counseling to be a better parent and find a legit part/full time job.

Goin' Dumb, Stupid, and Hyphy

To me, goin' dumb, stupid, and hyphy is a way of life and a feeling. That's how we express ourselves when we wanna let go and have fun. Doin' all those things can get you in trouble if you do too much at the wrong time.

To people who think it's stupid or ridiculous should know that there is a lot more to it than a dance or a way of expressin' your mind.

I think goin' dumb, stupid, and hyphy is gonna be around for along time. And by the time it's over, if it's over, then there's gonna be hella different ways of doin' it.

-D's Wifey

From The Beat: Thanks for clarifying that. Some people say they get dumb, stupid or hyphy through taking pills, which we think can never be cool, but if you can express your hyphie-ness without drugs we don't necessarily have a problem with it (unless it's at someone else's expense).

Going Dumb, Retarded, Hyphy

When I was younger I used to ask my older cousins how to go dumb hyphy at the same time but he told me I was too young to know about any of that, but I didn't care. I still was tryin' to find out how to go dumb hyphy.

When I was about thirteen years old I was going dumb, hyphy, and retarded. I showed my brother and my cousin how to really go dumb, hyphy and retarded. They asked me who showed me how to do all that and I told them myself because I did and I'm planning to make my own movements one day.

-Stella

From The Beat: It sounds like you got going early on. But you still leave us with the same question...what is going dumb and hyphy? What do you do to get hyphy? Does it mean something to you?

Court

What's good Beat? Well, I go to court tomorrow. I don't know. I'm hopefully going to my old group-home. I don't know what's gonna happen, but this time I'm gonna stay out of these Halls for good.

My PO said the next time I come here it's CYA, so I hope I get this stuff takin' care of and go home so I could get out of the system.

I got to go now to my lil' room. Much love to all from the Bay. One love,

-Lil' Grinch

From The Beat: You know what you've got to do - and you know the consequences if you don't. So, where is your life going to end up, Lil' Grinch? Forget the homies, 'cause the homies will truly help you find your way back in the Hall!

Friends/ Sisters

I have these friends and they like sisters.

My friends are true and real with me.

My friends I love to death.

If it came down to it I would take a bullet for them. So

Imari, Monique, Melissa and Wenny:

I love you all and always will. I

just have a question.

Do you feel the same way about me?

-Dunnette

From The Beat: It's so good to have those friends who are there through it all—to appreciate them and be appreciated in return.

What It Do

What do I do when I go home.

What do I do when I go to the Hall.

What do I do when I have a kid.

What do I do when I have fun.

What do I do to do right.

I know what to do now.

-Brian

From The Beat: Excellent questions Brian.

Too Many Lies

There are so many lies I've told that got me to where I am today. In jail and stuck with no place to go, when I finally do get out. From lying about where I am, what I'm doing, who I'm with, and how I'm going to change. I've never stopped though until now. I'm on a roll...

I just have to get out, get my job and have my babies in my home with my man. I feel like almost everyone I meet smiles in my face and takes me for some sorry person just because I keep to myself and I'm hella quiet. It's not my fault I don't trust anybody. But get to know me and you'll see and hear different. But don't get me mad, 'cause I have a bad temper and good hands.

-Christina

From The Beat: We're glad you're not lying anymore, but how about working on your temper? You need to learn how to control that without using your hands, especially if you're planning on having kids some day down the road and having your own home. And don't worry too much about being misunderstood. Though it hurts, the people who don't get to know you before making judgments aren't usually worth the trouble anyhow.

The Worst Crime

The worst crime a person could commit is to rape or kill one of my family members, because going to jail wouldn't be the problem. The problem would be what I would do to them, or what my family would do to them.

Rape or kill one of my family members and you will get tortured. I already have a bunch of plans for what to do if something like that really happens — and I know from experience.

-Cb

From The Beat: You suggest that there is a crime as bad or worse than rape or murder, and that is torture. The idea that one unconscionable crime would lead to another, hardly suggests the world will be a better place for anyone. Every act like that makes us less human, and less respectful of others' humanity. Be careful what fantasies of revenge you indulge in, for they can change you from the inside out; and you become a victim of your own mind.

My Life

I feel pretty bad, because I had court on Monday and they said I was getting out on electric monitor but its Tuesday night and I haven't gone home.

When I am in my room I feel really bad, I have a week in juvenile hall and I knew that he cheated on me. I don't know why he did this to me when I am always true to him when ever he gets locked up.

My mom and dad came to see me on Sunday and they told me they seen him with another girl so I dumped him and I'm just waiting on getting out and forgetting about him and get me an education and have a life.

-Yadira

From The Beat: That sounds like the best plan you could have. If he's someone who is in and out of jail, he won't be very helpful in keeping you in school and making positive decisions. Break-ups are always so hard to get over, but sometimes they are really blessings in disguise.

Love

Never thought I'd say it but Chris I love you started off as work then became my boo now you're my man my one and only

never knew I could be faithful and not feel lonely you take place of all the other dudes even doing a better job times two

I don't know how but I fell for you ASAP

it feels like we been together hella long

like I crossed the world and back

I wanna be with you today and forever Chris, this is not a game

if it was I wouldn't shed so many tears

and go through all this pain

feeling so alone I don't know what to do

I feel like I'm in the hospital

by myself with the flu

when I'm with you I feel so complete

-In love

From The Beat: It seems like you revised a poem and submitted both renditions. We like the closing lines in this one...being by yourself in the hospital with a flu is a really good way of describing loneliness.

My Life

Life is something like a movie, a movie that is the next time.

-Little Shorty

From The Beat: Or is it that movies are a lot like life. Hmmm... think about it.

Way Above Average

I don't care what any one says about me, I ain't your average female. I go dumb! I may look like the humble, timid, "good girl" type but in all reality I'm really the hyfeeist! Get me some purp and some henny and watch me go dumb on anyone in sight. Sober I'm plain hyfee, bengin' on whoever, not givin a what!

-Juicy

From The Beat: It sounds like you've gotten sucked into the hype. What does getting drunk and hyphee do for you? Does it bring you up or down in the long run? Appears t ous that it only brings you down, look where you sit tonight, trapped in a box. Time to wake up, leave the drugs, get smart and drop the bull!

The Worst Crime I Did

I think the worst crime I did, was when I had busted a lick in Newark with my patna. Well, I had went out to Newark one day, and I just didn't have anything to do.

So I just wanted to get some more money, but I didn't want to work back in those days — because I had a messed-up mentality about easy money is better than well-earned money. So, I just started boosting hella licks.

But now I regret everything, because I think back on things that I did and I know that what I did was hella wrong. I advise everybody not to do dumb stuff like me. You feel me?

-Brainiak

From The Beat: How did you get to that state of mind where you felt stolen money is better than well-earned money? Was it to justify a life style you had fallen into, following friends or family members? Did you really think what you were doing wasn't wrong? Or was it that you wanted to be "bad"? Tell us about how you got into this mind set — and then how you got out of it.

After Death

Hey, Beat, this is D. I was thinking about life after dying. You know? I think that if I die, it would be better, because I believe that God is going to take good care of me.

So I think it will be better after death, because I will be with my family members that have passed away. And I think that when it's time, it's going to be all good, because He say we will be sitting on a throne with Him and living the best life ever. That's the way I see it.

-D

From The Beat: How does life on earth fit into your picture of God's plan? Is this a place where we're tested to see if we can show love to others? Comfort the afflicted? Feed the hungry? Attend to the needs of the sick and suffering? Show that heaven is in our hearts so that when we die, God will show us heaven?

Rape and Torture

It's Clumsy from Camp. My release date is coming up on the last day of July — and I'm out!

Now to the topic: I think the worst crime a person can commit is rape someone and then torture the person until he or she dies. I think it's the worst crime because the person be dying slowly and painfully. Yeah, mayne, that's messed up!

To all in the Halls, Camps, CYA's, Pen's — stay up!

-Clumsy

From The Beat: It's hard to argue with your opinion. It's about as terrible a crime as we can imagine. Did you read or hear in the news about the GI's who did it in Iraq, then murdered the entire family and burned down the house?

A Bad Crime

I feel that rape and murder are the worst crimes that can be committed. These crimes should have the maximum sentence. Rape and murder are both taking lives.

-Law And Order

From The Beat: That's true—both crimes take lives. We would love to hear more of your views on the subject. For instance, how does rape also take a life?

Oh Girl

I miss the way you touch me
The way you hold me
Oh girl, I want nobody but you
And my feelings and love for you is so real
Oh girl, you gave me a chance to have you in my life
And keep and love tight
But I blew my chance
Oh girl, I just wish our love could of last
But I know messed up in the past
Oh girl
My love

I'm here to say I need you and want you
No other but you
So please give me one more chance
And I promise you

I'll treat you with the most respect and give you unconditional love
I have ever lasting feelings for you
Oh girl
I need and want no other but you
So come back into my life
And make our love once again true.

-Young Ad

From The Beat: Very romantic, but what happened that made her leave you? Just because you miss her, she should come back? Why should she give you another chance? If you really want her back, you're gonna have to prove to her that you deserve her. Don't ya' think?

I'm Getting Closer

This Brah Dummy, and I'm getting closer to getting out of here! By the time this gets posted in The Beat, I should be released, and y'all should be hearing me on the radio!

But take advantage of the good things that God puts in yo' life. I got a baby on the way, and now my time is even more precious. I can't be grindin' on the corner no more, 'cause I got to be there for my baby. What I'm trying to say is — put your priorities first. Be yo' own person. You dig? And people will love you for that on everything!

-Brah Dummy

From The Beat: We like the way you talk, and we'll listen for you on the box — but you don't tell us what name to listen for. Do you record as Brah Dummy? If you read this, send another piece to The Beat. Mail it to the address on page three, bottom of the page — and put a Beat staff person's name.

Crying Is Good

I believe it's ok to cry whenever you feel it coming on. You should just let it out and then try to laugh about the situation.

-Cherrelle

From The Beat: Good advice.

What Happens After You Die

I believe after you die you are reborn.
You never know how or what you will become.
I know I believe in the Lord
I wish a lot more people felt for Him the way I do.
I feel God will forgive you
and what's meant to be is going to be.

-Cherrelle

From The Beat: It sounds like you're incorporating different beliefs into your spirituality, and that's great. We should all be able to decide what we believe.

Going Dumb

When you going dumb it means that you are feeling your self, or you are dancing, or you are smoking', and you go to a party and you go dumb. Goin' stupid at a party just like you goin' dumb, stupid, hyphy
That's all folks.

-Kameko

From The Beat: Thanks for your take. We follow, kinda sorta.

What's Up With Me

What it do Beat? As for me, chilling.

This is the homie from Hayward dropping some lines about what happened with me. I go to court on the 22nd of June, feel me? It's cool in my unit, I got to get my straight through phone call today so I'm feeling cool.

-Payaso

From The Beat: Good luck in court. Don't get too comfortable in the Hall. Remember, you've got a better home out there... somewhere.

Rape Is the Worst

The worst crime someone would do is — rape a lil' boy or girl. From my point of view it is the worst thing you could do because it could change that person for the rest of their life. If I was to experience something like that, I would want to emasculate that person and blind him, too — because to rape a boy or girl is not normal!

-Karlitos

From The Beat: Most of our writers seem to agree with you that rape, especially the rape of a child, is the worst crime. You give clear voice to the rage of the victim of such a crime. We have heard of the state giving the convicted rapist drugs to make him impotent.

Back Again!

What's up Beat, man I just came here today for a violation.

At court they said I got two weeks until the next court date. They tryna see what to do wit me. Go home to East Oakland or move wit my moms in Fremont. They said the town ain't safe for me cause last month I got shot on mothers day, three times in both of my legs. Because were I live it's a hot neighborhood, so they want me out.

Hopefully I get out in two weeks cause this gets boring after a while. I was trying to see my cousin in the other unit, but they hatin so it's good. Wassup to all the homies locked up right now, my cousin Scarface, Abel...and it goes on but you got to cut. Life goes on...

-Lil' Shagy

From The Beat: Lil' Shaggy, you've gotten yourself into a whole lot of trouble. Where do you see your life in five years? Life will go on — but be careful where you take it.

Hustle

i hustle
i get it
all day i won't forget it
money is power
but not everything you feel me
drug dealers
hustlas
killas and bustas
it all the same thing
gettin' money to be the king
i'm a hustla
and that's my dream

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: It is not all the same at all. There is a bright line that divides a legal hustle from an illegal one. To go from an illegal hustle to killing, is a step most are not willing to make. Dream of wealth, but clear your mind — or you'll end in a nightmare of living forever in a cage, or dead at an early age.

What It Do

First allow me to introduce myself. It's Lil' Crazy from Hayward. How's all the vatos doing? I hope everybody is doing their tiempo as smoothly as possible. Well, as for this vato, I'm coo'; just chillin' over here in this so-called max unit (ain't nothing max 'bout it).

Anyways, I'm here postin' But yeah, I'm out soon, on August the twenty-fourth! So what's up? Keep yo' head up and keep writing for The Beat. This vato's out. Alrato, out. And what's up to all in the other units, you know.

-Lil' Crazy

From The Beat: We're glad you're getting out, but we're worried about you. 'Cause when you didn't know, you were writing more about the need to change the way vatos live in the street, and now you sound like you're planning to go back and repeat the same behaviors that had you here stressing. Don't you feel like there's something missing in this picture, like learning from this experience? But everybody including you it seems, gots to prove he's the downest vato that ever creased up his Ben D's. Wake up young homie, or prepare for the worse and most regretful ride in your life.

After Death...

I really don't know, but I think you go to Heaven or Hell based on the things you did in life. Like me, I don't know where I would go, 'cause I've done a lot. But hopefully Heaven, 'cause I believe in God and I want to be with my grandma forever.

-Heaven Bound

From The Beat: If you believe that there is a Heaven and a Hell, what do you think determines which place you go? If you believe in a god, is just the belief enough to get you to Heaven? Some religions believe that your behavior in this world determines how you will spend eternity. Just a little something to think about.

The Worst Crime

The worst crime possible is murder, cause it's 25 with life. You ain't getting out.

-Shagy

From The Beat: Murder definitely has the biggest punishment. Do you think that people who commit murder are thinking about the consequences before they act?

All Right To Cry

It's alright to cry when there a death in the family or a close friend that was like family to you. Real ninja cry no matter what people say.

-Call Me Cry Baby

From The Beat: It seems like whenever someone feels the need to cry, that's the appropriate time.

Suckas

All my patnas. I think they all suckas talking hella shhh. When I'm in here, they said they gonna write to me and accept my collect calls, my ass! That's why ya' ain't gonna see me anymore. My ass gonna go to ROP for 18 months, so I'm out.

-Lbeezie

From The Beat: Lbeezie, try to put yourself in their situation, would you be able to write a friend a letter with all the distractions on the outs? Do you think that because you are out of site, you are out of mind? Or are your patnas, not really your patnas? Obviously, in this situation you need to focus on yourself and what's important to you, which is ROP. Forget your friends for now, keep your head up and think about you.

2 Poems

1. I have shared
The radiance of your smile
I have enjoyed
The happiness of your laughter
I have thrilled to your slightest touch
I have memorized every part of you
I have seen you say
"I love you" with your eyes.
I have learned about life from you.
I have known th ejoy of loving you
More with each passing day.

And yet, I have only scratched the surface of my love for you.

2. All I Ever Need
All I ever need is you
To kiss away the tears
And wipe away my frowns
All I ever need is your love
To help me through lonely nights
And to make me smile

After a long day

All I ever need is to hear you whisper softly "I love you" when I wake up in the morning.

And before I fall asleep at night, to make my life complete

-Alexis and Lb

From The Beat: Seeing all these love letters between yourself and Alexis are inspiring. Why don't you write the story of how and why you met? We'd love to read that story.

My Birthday in The Hall

This Lil' Bezo coming at ya' live at the Hall on 150 Street in San Leandro. This shhh is weak and it's not cool. My birthday was last month and I was in the Hall.

This is not the place that I wanted to be on my birthday. But, if you do the crime you got to do the time. I messed up.

I got to go live with my dad for a lil' bit. But man this ain't cool, you got to be locked up all day long. But that's what I get. I have to go down South, so I can do good. But when I get out I got to go see my girl and you know get some.

-Lil' Bezo

From The Beat: All right Lil' Bezo, you're seem like you understand your situation and we hope you do what you've got to do. Be smart and spend your next birthday with loved ones.

Rehabilitate or Not

Will I rehabilitate when I turn eighteen?
In seven-months I think not.
'Cause I'm a hustler.

I think for myself.

I'm my own man, I'm my own man,
responsible for my own actions.

This jail shhh never taught me no reason to try to change,

so I came back
livin' my life in the fast lane,
hustlin' all night
for more than change.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: We call b-s on that. If you were really thinking for yourself, you'd be thinking about what a dead end job you've chosen, and you'd have bigger dreams. Petty crooks are a dime a dozen, and easily replaceable. But individual people who pursue their dreams and figure out what their one greatest talent are? Those are the heroes who truly think for themselves. So who are you? What are your talents? What makes you different? What are your dreams? Tell us that, and then we'll believe you're really your own man.

When I Die

i always wondered
what happens
when you die

-D-Lo

From The Beat: Let's say you die every night and are reborn everyday. Now we wonder why you'd keep living this way when you could make a fresh start — it's all matter of how much heart you've got, or not.

What's Good

first off let me start this off
by sending my utmost love with respect
to all locked in torcida
what's good with you beat
this that vato slick
coming at you from max
just here chillin' like a villain
letting these that pass by
reminiscing about them old days
welcoming the new ones
here with the love ones
doing what we do best
busting down doing my thing
for the most part
just waiting for court next month
well i'm out this piece
with love and respect
alratos

-Slick

From The Beat: We do wish you'd take a look at what put you here, not even the specific details but your life in general out there should make it clear that you need to make some changes should God bless you with another chance to be free. With no disrespect to the homies you see as family, take a step away from the (what shall we call them?) rituals of violence, the origins of which you know better than we, maybe those gatherings with weed, alcohol, crystal meth' and E — or whatever. You know what we mean.

Beat Within

What's good Beat. This is Lil' Grinch, I'm doing coo' so far. I've been here for a few weeks and I got a few more weeks to go, but it's been nothing. I've been here five times and I'm already used to this shhh.

But next time I come, I go to CYA, and if I go I'm not really trippin' 'cause I know hella homeboys out there. But much and don't let no suckas in your path. Till next time, one love.

-Lil' Grinch

From The Beat: Lil' Grinch, is that all you have planned for the rest of your life? Come on now, you tryna act like you not trippin, but you KNOW that you don't want to be locked up in CYA. If you don't change your lifestyle, then that's your fate, but if you want a better life, well, you've got to change. It's your choice.

What I Need

The type of ninja I need
is someone I can trust.

The type of ninja I need
is someone that gone be there for me.

The type of ninja I need
is when he in front of his boys
he ain't gone act another way
in front of them towards me
I need one who gone love me
for me and who willing to be there for me.

A ninja that's willing to wait for me
when when I'm ready for that.
That's the type of ninja I need.

-Lil' Pebbles

From The Beat: We think that's the kind of someone everyone deserves, and more. Hold out for someone who's going to treat you right, otherwise it's not worth it.

A Ball and A Lie

I was tricked into throwing that ball at the car because my friends said it didn't have an alarm. So when I threw the ball it hit the window and broke, and I got in trouble.

-Thomas

From The Beat: Some friends. We hope you don't still spend time with them. They lied to get you in trouble!

Life Of A Homie

always walkin' down the street,
representin' your crew
always watchin' your back to see what will
happen next
kickin' it with the homies and talkin' wit' the
girls.
You walk down the streets and say
"ef" everybody
that wants to "ef" with me.
Walkin' down the street to go meet a girl,
you see a lot of enemies,
so you walk up to them and represent your
crew,
and you hit him in his jaw and say "ef" you.
With your rag in your back pocket
walkin' down thea street with your head held
high.
Proud of what you do,
kickin' it wit the homies
drinkin' an smokin' a blunt,
While you rollin' down the street in that Impala
looking for some girls.
Saying "ef" everybody!

-Maniac

From The Beat: We can see how on the surface, this would look like a great life. You get protection, you intimidate other people on the street, you can pretend that the respect is for your individual strength and power when it's really just because people are afraid of numbers, you can even think that you will all watch out for each other (though to find out the truth on that, read what the BWO writers say about so-called homies). But in the end, you know who ends up "ef"d? You. You end washed in jail, waiting for some one who thinks you're just a number to open the door so you can spend ten minutes outside. Or you end up causing sorrow to your family. You find yourself with no degree, no real job skills, a body ravaged by drugs. Don't you deserve more than this?

Hella Mad, Part 2

What's up Beat? This Lil 'Bee, and man I'm hella mad because these fake ass bootsy ass top citizens in jail.

What's a top citizen in jail get? To clean people clothes and get a extra burrito on yo' plate. I ain't never gon' make top citizen. I get an hour every night, but it's nothing to me.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: If it were really nothing to you, would you have bothered to write about it? Sounds like you want that prize. Why don't you try for it for real, and see if it makes you feel a little less "hella mad"?

Feelin' Myself!

Going Dumb, Stupid, hyphy is just feelin' yourself.
It's like an extra energy that just have you going crazy
Like shaking your dreads or just dancing wild.
Like getting loud with someone
or just starting something for no reason at all.
That's going dumb.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Do you miss this feeling? Is this you? Where do you fit in?

Keep It Lit – In A Positive Way

I'm 'bout to be 18 years old next month, it's time to do something different than what I been doing my whole life. It's time to go the way God wants me to go.

He got a plan for me, and it's not to be behind these wlls. I realize that I need to stop my childish ways and it's time to grow up.

To all stay up and think about what y'all doing , but keep it lit in a positive way, bra'. It's time for a change.

-Lil Booda

From The Beat: This reads like the beginning of what could be a life-changing piece of writing. What do you that plan is? What does it mean to "keep it lit" for the positive? Do you feel better about yourself when you write from this point of view, when you picture yourself changing? What is it that feels better?

Going to Camp

Man this Lil' Bee, you know. I'm hella mad 'cause today is Tuesday and he still ain't come to pick me up, I guess I'll wait until Thursday. I'll be up there.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: Man, if we had a dollar or every time you wrote "I'm hella mad." We hope by the time this prints that you're out and moving on from this whole experience.

Yadaa-da-da-mean?

What it do Beat. This Lil' Mani again asking y'all to free my squad, my peoples, all my ninjas and we gon' go dumb.

Guess what - they tryna send me to a group-home and soon as I touch down I'm gon' boogie and get on, yadaa-da-da mean? Yam-tom-bout.

-Lil' Mani

From The Beat: Oh please, with that attitude, we wouldn't free you either! Quit going dumb, that's why y'all locked up. Go smart! Then you'll go free.

Separated

I'm missing my ninja. They got us behind these walls, separated.

I know one day we gon' all be out shining. It don't hurt for long, my people that been around me for years, know what I mean, we gon' always be here, we gon' always be around.

Don't even rush it, stay solid and know Lil 'Booda loves y'all, and we gon' always stay. Rest in peace Marcellus.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: We hope you're out soon too, and shining. And like you wrote in your other piece, we hope it's in a positive way.

A Question

How is the jail system supposed to help young men and women prepare for life and the problems they deal wit' when they get out? But they keeping us locked up!

-Richard

From The Beat: That's a bloody good question. Why don't you help us try to answer it? What do you think it would be good to have in the jail system? What kinds of programs and approaches would help you "prepare for life"?

Holdin' It Down

What's up with it Beat, this is Onio ready to get on. They get me in here living a weak ass jail life, but one day I will bounce back, because know that it's nothing to boss. I am a fly boy, I should have wings on my back, AR-15s and Macs you never seen none of that. I am in Max Unit with ninjas, doing what real ninjas do: hold it down, feel me.

-Onio

From The Beat: What does "holdin' it down" mean to you. It can be different things to different people, but from you when you write it's always like there's a war going on, between Light Onio and Dark Onio. So which one was it that wrote this piece? A little bit of both?

It's Time to Get Out

I'm gon' peeps. I'm leaving and going to a 6-9 month group home in LA. Feel me, I'm gon' pimp this stuff and get home to the hood and to my baby mama. Feel me. I'm gon' get this diploma and some more, feel me.

-Kip

From The Beat: We hope you do all the things you say, and we know for sure you can. Keep in touch with The Beat and let us know how it goes.

Knowing Who's Fake

I'll tell how just by looking in his or her eyes. That will tell you. I am a real ninja so I just see past all that fakeness they show me, so I do what I do and keep it lit, feel me? But if you don't I am going to have to keep it real. I am going to smile in yo' face.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: The eyes are the windows to the soul, that's what they say. If you look in someone's eyes you can always tell if they're telling the truth or not. Do you think that's true?

When I Die

What happens when I die?

A young soul would be put to rest.
My ninjas will stand out on the corner and pour out drank for me.

Especially that Tanqueray
I will always be remember
And my name will always live on.

-Young Keith

From The Beat: What about your soul? Do you believe in reincarnation? Or a Heaven or a Hell? Do you think that you will be proud of your life when you die? What do you want to be remembered for? Don't you want more than just poured liquor?

Grown Up

Young ninja in the streets, packin' the heat
Krazy-K you know that's me, but why you wanna beef wit' me?

I see that look on your face, yeah you smilin' but you lookin' grimy
I see you plottin' but this shhh will never stop,
I got kids

It's time to grow up, take care of my bizz
Ninjas try to test me but I ain't got nothin' to prove, now I got somethin' to lose.
It's Stockton so I'll make it and my kids don't lose.

-Krazy Keith

From The Beat: It's good to see that determination you have to make life good for your kids, but if that's true, why are you still claiming a set? We pulled the gang references out of this piece, and we hope you pull them out of your life. It's not fair to your children!

The One

This real sexy girl made me feel something that I never felt before
She just that one that every gangster need
Something about this girl's style that makes me feel no regret

I know how to keep a girl happy, that I know for sure
But to keep it real, I'm sprung
Ladies I know a women worth yo boy

I'm the low key love doctor, now I'm keeping it real
I will tell anyone that my girl got me sprung
My respect to girls who would not like me.

-Jermaine

From The Beat: Jermaine, what is it about this girl that got you sprung? No regret - what do you mean by that? Actually, it's the last line that got us questioning... nice piece.

Sometimes I Pop

When people look at me, they see some one that gave potential they don't think that I am a nice kid but when they disrespect me I go bad on sight because I be off pills and bo'. Sometimes I pop.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: Seems like you already know what brings you down. Maybe you're a nice kid, the real you is a good person, and it's the drinking and pills that mess you up. Maybe if you quit that, 90 percent of your problems might go away! Now do you have it in your to quit?

Going Dumb Off Pills

I think that's stupid because people be getting killed doing that stuff, but some people think it's cool. I mean in some ways it is cool, like when you just dancing to a song, but when you off pills and you go dumb, it's a whole different type of going dumb.

It could get to the point that you could hurt someone real bad. And at the same time you could hurt your own self.

-Diego

From The Beat: So are you saying what divides fun hyphy from messed up hyphy is the drugs? What do you other Beat readers think about this point of view?

This Movement

What does going dumb, stupid or hyphy mean? Well I can say that it's just a movement for people when they are either drunk or on a pill. Hyphy is just another way of saying crunk, but people in the Bay they don't get crunk, they get hyphy.

Hyphy is when you see some one hanging on their car window going dumb, stupid and hyphy and when you see them you 'bout to see them throwing up their turfs, like me.

-Lil' Mien

From The Beat: Not sure what you trying to say here. First you stay on topic for a few lines, which we follow, then you get into where you are from, which we cut out. Now tell us what's your plan upon getting out? Returning to your old ways or making the change of your life? It's not easy.

It's Dee Cee

What's up Beat and Beat readers? This yo homeboy Dee Cee. Going dumb and stupid to me means get high, drunk. It's just a way of dancing when that E-40 and MacDre go on, ya feel?

-Dee Cee

From The Beat: We've read dozens of definitions of going dumb, but yours is the most clear and to the point, thank you!

Dumb

This young P'Deazz. I go dumb and stupid. Catch me on the street doing the hyphy movement stumping on cars. Going dumb to me is like monkeys in cages smoke a few blunts then we all crazy. Hyphy to me is laying, down going dumb on the pavement.

-Young P'Deazz

From The Beat: We love how much pride comes through when Beat writers talk about the hyphy movement, but be careful out there! We must say, yo uare asking for trouble packing that heat, time to rise up and grab the pencil and go to school!

These Streets

I got taken' of the streets by the UCPD, now I'm up inside the Hall putting it down, behind them walls. I'm a lil' gangster 'til the day that I fall and now I'm eating county treats busting down, putting it down every day of the week. I can't wait 'til the day that they say you released.

I'll be a little smarter and I'll be back up on my feet

Free my ninjas, but this is how we live up in the hood, where we be we was raised by them streets and we gon' die by these streets.

-Looney

From The Beat: A little smarter won't be enough. What you need to become is a LOT smarter. Smart enough to realize that the drug game is a set-up, that the rich people are the ones who really own the streets, that without meaning to, you're helping to keep your own people down, that this road can lead to nothing but tragedy. After you get that smart, then you have to get some heart - not the kind of heart that you already have (bravery, courage) but the kind of heart it would take to see that you are worth much much more than a dead-end hate filled life. This is our hope for you, and our prayer. Pece.

Question Lord

Lord I got a question:

Would you forgive me for my sins even if I don't regret them? 'Cause sometimes no matter how hard I try, I feel no remorse. I feel I had to do what I had to do. But then again, maybe it's just the O.E. numbing my pain. I don't know, but send my homies my love. If enemies lay me down to sleep, I pray to the lord my soul he'll keep. When I die in this life of hate, I pray to the Lord my soul he'll take.

-Young Shorty

From The Beat: Regardless of what you're being tried for, we do know that in your past, you've fought and hurt other people because they were your so-called enemies. Did you ever feel remorse for that? Not because you were "supposed" to, but because you tried to put yourself in your enemies' shoes and try and figure out if they were really actually so different from you in the end? We know that you stand behind your actions, but we also wonder if a part of you hasn't shut down empathy on purpose, because if you did allow yourself to feel empathy for your enemies, then you'd have to give up on a lot of things you think are important. You know why you'd have to give them up? Because you have such a strong conscience - it wouldn't let you keep on this way.

Hyphy Ain't No Movement

Going dumb is just what ninjas do in Oakland.

It ain't no movement: like E40 said,

it's just what ninjas do in Oakland.

It ain't no movement like E40 said.

It's just what ninjas do, it's in our blood.

I go dumb, that's just me, 'cause I'm sick wit' it.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: Sick wit' it. No truer words have ever been spoken. But that sickness is a disease: hood disease. We'd hate to see it take you down. Like we said in workshop last week, you've got so much more heart and mind than you dare show. Why is that?

I Hate Snitches

Man I hate snitches, because they always havin 'ninjas go to jail for real man. I am in there because this girl and dude snitched on me and ma patna in Vallejo.

Man why you want to snitch on me, what I do to you? They trying to send me to the Y, but I ain't goin' out. A ninja about to go to the Y, but I'll be back in a minute. So to all keep yo' head up.

-Tanom

From The Beat: There's a way to beat the snitches - a sure-fire way to keep the haters from ratting you out. Do you know what it is? It's 100 percent guaranteed to work: don't commit crimes. But if you're going to keep doing wrong, it's not on the snitches that you got caught, it's on you.

Parents

Parents are good because they take good care of you. You know why parents are good --because they teach you to be a young man or a young woman and they can teach you responsibility.

So that's why our parents are good. Because if you don't listen to your parents you can be on the street or in the Hall, or you can just get kicked out of the house.

If you do get kicked out of the house where are you going to stay at? You ain't going to live with your friend, because after a while he's going to get tired of you. Then where are you going to live at? In cars or hotels?

So all I got to say to you is God bless you.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: As usual Lil' Sam, everything you write has a message of hope and gratitude for all the good that surrounds us even when we're at our lowest. Thanks for a reminder of how much it helps that our loved ones watch out backs.

Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

It's ya boy Willy Bo aka Jb

Yeah, I go stupid, dumb, hyphy and crazy I'm from Oakland where my ninjas go eighteen

Hyphy is energy and this is how we use it Shakin' dreads, showing grills, dancing getting stupid

Spinning scrappers in circles and just wilding out Throwing up yo' turf showin' what yo' side about I'm from the Bay where my ninjas, we're on one Stomping cars at an Oakland sideshow

Ninjas don't care 'cause they gone off hydro Catch me going stupid putting it down for Cridy Stupid, dumb, retarded, yellow buses and silly do When ninjas gettin' hyphy in the town we're really cold

-Lil' Jb

From The Beat: Thanks for telling us how you see it. Keep rhyming.

RIP Davon

I'm always gon' miss that ninja because that ninja go dumb. He a smasher and he stay smashin' on ninjas. I remember when we was on the block gettin' high, we used to always beat on hella ninjas when we was high. We used to mess with hella girls. On the real, me and him and our ninjas, we done been through it all.

I Caught my first case with them, went to Juvenile Hall. I remember when we used to always bang on ninjas, and everybody used to hate on us. Bang in peace Davon.

-Tanom

From The Beat: This piece made us sad for two reasons - first off because of the tragic loss of your friend, and also because we realized that the great horror is this: There is no such thing as "banging in peace". Banging never brings anything but tears and loss and despair. It's almost the opposite of peace, don't you think?

I Like To Go Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

I like to go dumb stupid and hyphy in Oakland

If you mess with me you will see a true clown

I go dumb off purple, pills, and drank

I go so hyphy, I get the strip to crank

I like to ride and go stupid all day.

If my boys with me, everything will be OK

'Cause we really go dumb, stupid and hyphy, in the van

If we see them boys we gon' be coo'

'Cause that's what we do all day

-Kennard

From The Beat: It's always good to see talent on the page, talent like yours that can make rhymes so catchy and clever. But what you're rhyming about - the drugs (all these drugs are dangerous in and of themselves, but when you mix them together, it's basically like you're pouring poison down your throat), the dangerous driving, the conflicts... it's like watching a whole town of young people commit a kind of suicide. If hyphy is about a feeling and an attitude of music and fun and dancing, why do you need the drugs to make it happen?

The Dumb Movement

The go dumb movement is about ninjas like me Lil' Pug out in the town, riddin' and shakin' our dreads or dancin' on top of hoods and openin' the doors or bouncin' out the car and start dancin' or you just start hangin' out the window. But then when them boys come we still ain't stoppin'. We go 'till six in the morning, yea, tell me when to go.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: We're telling you to go start the Smart Movement. Dumb sounds like fun for a few hours, but if you started the smart movement, how many fewer young folks would be sleeping in the juvi hall tomorrow night?

Pen Fight

Yeah Beat I'm writing this for my ninja Rob. When we was on the bus one day and I was fighting with some guys and he came out of nowhere and hit one and he dropped and I was getting on the other two guys and my girlfriend started to help and it was like in the pen. Everybody was fighting. In loving memory R.I.P. Rob

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: How horrible for another young man in the Bay to lose his life to violence. It shouldn't be this way!! What can we do to stop the streets from bleeding?

Snitches

Yeah this Lil' Pug. I'm on my way to a group home because this boy said that I was with him when he did the robbery. Yea man boy I'm telling everybody that you snitching.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: Well there's two kinds of snitching. One, where you tell on who did it. Another, where you lie about who did it. While sometimes it's the right thing to name the real person, it's never right to lie about it to get an innocent person in trouble. We're so sorry this happened to you, especially if you are innocent.

Gifts For The Family

If I was given a million dollars I would buy my family everything they wanted, like my mom always wanted an Infinite car, and my grandma a Jaguar and my uncle and 2006 Crystler and my big brother a four door box Chevy and me a 2006 Dodge on "22" inch tires.

-Dorsey

From The Beat: Don't forget, you'd also have to get a big garage to fit all those cars!

Don't Care

This is Grumpy from Berkeley. Well they were talking about what will happen when you die. Well I don't give a shhh. I'm just trying to live my life to the fullest, you feel me. Well that's how I feel. Just to spend my life with my lady and have babies, that how I wanna live my life before I die. Oh yeah and get this money for real.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We hope the life you live with your lady and future babies is long and happy, but what will you do to ensure that you'll be with them? The lifestyle you choose to live will determine whether you'll be in prison or worse, or with your lady making a family and being responsible.

When We Cry

It's a time to cry when you doing a long time in the hall. That's a place to cry, but when my brother got killed I didn't know what to do blood. It just hurts when you lose someone you were close to. It hurt too damn much, blood. This is your boy G-money dedicating this piece to Jt.

-G-money

From The Beat: Both you and your cousin JT are loyal Beat writers. We hope you see each other in freedom soon, and you can cry with joy.

Lost Too Much

RIP to the people who I miss. I miss Tay, Tr, Raydaddy, Ready Rock, Rod, and my aunt Carolyn and my Mark, because I knew them for a long time and they are my family and every time I think about them I cry so RIP to my ninjas. Love Lil' Tuttle.

-Lil' Tuttle

From The Beat: Awful to lose so many people, we assume to violence too. What can you do to better your community? What can you do to stay clear of the violence and the criminal justice system?

Crying Shame

What up wit' it Beat? Man this Lil' Dt. I feel it's ok to cry whenever you feel like it. I feel that a real ninja don't care what people say or think about it, now on the other hand a sucka ass ninja would be scared and ashamed to cry in front of his patnas or other people so if you're a solid ass ninja you wouldn't care. My ninjas know where I'm from we've been solid, you feel?

-Lil' Dt.

From The Beat: That's a great philosophy. If we all didn't care so much about what other people thing, the world would be a different place.

J5 RIP

i'm gone write this
for my cousin
J5 rest his soul
i miss my ninja
i didn't get to see him
before he died
i wish i could've seen him
before he got killed

-Young Quez

From The Beat: It's a modest wish, deeply felt we're sure. But why accept the death toll of life in the street when there's a cure — 'cause it's a disease of the mind that has you stay on the grind as if you were blind to the cost. The money is not worth the loss. Find another way to make your pay. RIP J5.

Turn The Lights

When I turn the lights out
I think
the world is ending,
when the lights on
I think
somebody turn the pain away
black out
lights
waste of time
of space.

-Brandon

From The Beat: It sounds like your light is having a hard time shining. See the darkness through and eventually comes a brighter day. As for your writing, please let us see your work before you turn it in, we definitely had a hard time understanding/following this piece.

Doesn't Look Good

Well everything seems to be going downhill now for me. I had got off probation December 28, 2005. I got a job and was doing good, then just last week I got caught up for a pistol.

They trying to send me to the Y because of my past history and this is my twelfth time here. I'm going to fight this case. They trying to give me a deal but I ain't taking no deals, it's either I beat the case and get out free or I lose and do my time as a man.

Well that's how life is going.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Come on Grump, what were you doing with a pistol? That right there is a problem. Sounds like maybe you got yourself incarcerated. Next time stay away from anything that will get you caught up—especially guns! We're just glad you didn't get caught for using it. Wake up!

Happy Birthday Marcellus

Six-nineteen-zero-six was your b-day.

You turned 19,

I wish I was out so I could go stupid wit' the rest of the homies

but you see where I am.

We love and miss you, never forgotten.

May God rest your soul.

Rest in peace bra.

Happy b-day Cell!!

-Lil' Naudie Bo

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing with The Beat more of your love for your friend. We hope Cell's early death will be your wake up call to a better life, a life free of violence, death and incarceration.

When To Cry

It's a right time to cry when

It's a hard time in your life

It's a right time to cry when you're

Happy or sad or when you did something bad

Your boy Lil' Tuttle

-Lil' Tuttle

From The Beat: And it's a right time to write, when you've got something to say!

When You Get Out Of Juvi

The first thing I'ma do when I get out of Juvenile Hall is go home, take a shower, put on some shoes, pants, fresh white on, then go get my hair braided and be outside all day. Im gonna get somebody and go eat some real food.

-Antonio

From The Beat: Sounds like a great first day, we hope it's soon.

"The Real Me"

when you see me
what do you see
a thug, a gangsta,
not a wanna-be a hustler
tryin' to make that money
a pimp out there sellin' them honeys
you just lookin at the cover of the book
you might think i'm mean
i might have you shook
i ain't no criminal
i ain't no crook
i am a gang banga
but it's an image, a look
take a guess to who i am
'cause i'm somewhat
of a mystery man

-Big Vic

From The Beat: There's no mystery as to your talent as a writer, or your insight into the lives of gang bangin' night riders. What we don't know is who will be revealed as you do this time and think your way through what you've been taught about crime and the street calls real — 'cause we know truth has a higher calling than the street's appeal. How strong can you be in reality, facing the truth with an honest mentality? That's a mystery, man. You feel?

Two Things

It is ok to cry when you need to let your feelings out. Not to be a tough guy all the time and just cry
The worst crime you could do is any, but it depends on how far you take it.

-Jose

From The Beat: Good point, everything is relative. Take care of yourself out there!

Untitled

Verse: Scrapper through the block
females always jock
making money that's what we do
posted 'till about two
then 5-0 roll through
trying to shut us down
I'll run through yo' place
Wit' a smile on my face
that's how we get down in the town
oh

Chorus: Ninja goin' dumb
in the bay
man, ninja's going dumb in the bay
Yee

Verse: Oakland's where I from
purple in my lungs
stunna shades in the sun
oh the block holding it down
out here bussing rocks
I aint trying to get popped
I'm hitting these gates
gone make the escape
and be back to sell these grapes

Chorus: Ninja's going dumb
in the town
the planet of the grapes
don't smoke that brown
man, ninja's going dumb in the town
Yee

-Be Eazy

From The Beat: You've obviously got a lot of talent—every week you send in some impressive pieces—we just wonder why you don't apply yourself more. Challenge yourself to say something positive and you'll blow us away with your skills, as it is your stuff sounds like so much of the other mainstream stuff that doesn't realize the power in music and words. Use your skill to lift people (and yourself) up, not push them down.

A Walk In My Shoes

What it do Beat and Beat readers, it's yo homeboy Dee Cee from Hayward. My topic today is why you can't walk a day in my shoes. You can't walk in my shoes because all the enemies trying take over, but it ain't nothing, because the homies run them out, but that ain't nothin' compared to having to shake the task even though you can't always shake them if you get caught, just do the time. I'm out till next time.

-Dee Cee

From The Beat: Sounds like you have some heavy shoes to walk in. By the way, keep your shoes, who wants the pain you carry by choice too. Wake up and don't be a fool messing with other fools and the police, you can have it!

Is the System Pimping Us

What's up Beat. This yo' boy Lil' Purp, and man sometimes it seems like the system is pimpin' us, because they try to send us to group homes and stuff like that, knowin' we got a history of runnin' and they still want to send us.

Then we keep on doin' the same thing and then it's ova.

They want to send us on our way for some time to the Y, that's where they going to send me to do some time because I got snitched on. But I ain't trippin', I just got to watch who I mess wit'

-Tanom

From The Beat: If you know that you run all the time, then you might be able to beat the system. What is it that makes you run, what are the temptations. If you could keep from running, just once, doesn't that mean you will finally be free? What kind of rules would you have to make for yourself to keep from running?

Reasons To Cry

It's ok to cry when someone in your family passes away or when someone that's very close to you, you be with a lot. Like a best friend or somebody.

It's also ok to cry if you play a very competitive sport that you play and you lose the championship.

One more reason to cry is if you're graduating from high school or college and you're so happy for yourself that you just let it out. That's reason why a man would cry.

-Lamont

From The Beat: Thanks for the examples, yet what about when something just makes you feel sad, like breaking up with a girl-friend or getting yelled at by someone you care a lot about?

Raiders

What's up Beat it's Ally Bo getting at y'all 'bout the Raiders. Man I can't wait for the season to start. We lost a hitter in Charles Woodson, but we got some new hogs like Aaron Brooks and Michael Huff. Well anyways all my Raider fans keep it solid baby.

-Lil' Ally Bo

From The Beat: Ahhh sports. But it's all about them Swingin' As right now! But you have every right to be excited about football, camp is right around the corner.

Going Dumb, Stupid, And Hyphy

We like to go dumb especially in Oakland
Heads bobbin' side to side, as cars swangin'
sideways on the street
All doors open and slappin' as we ride down the strip
Ain't scared of nothing

I keep thump and I got flows that'll leave ya
breathless

Don't think I got small things 'cause I got chops
that'll leave you chestless

I got dumb, get stupid and hyphy but I got a bright
mind

Smart in the streets and I stay on my grind
I get that money that's my top commitment

You haters just talkin' you politicians

I smoke grapes, push weight and get money in the
slump

Stay on topic 'cause I get hyphy go stupid and dumb
I'm so fly and I got diamonds in my mouth and chain

Stay fresh in white tees, throw it away if it has a
stain

I get dough without a weapon

Don't need to hit a lick, just eat on the street and I
get mo'

You think makin' money is easy but it ain't that
simple

-Funky Fresh

From The Beat: You've got talent for writing flows, but you leave us wanting to know more about your ideas. What do you mean making money ain't that simple? Why is money your top commitment? What does it have to do with snapping the necks of folks who enter your turf? How are you gonna keep your bright mind bright if you keep walking in all this darkness? Wake up before it's too late!

Thoughts On Beat Topics

It's ok for a man to cry at any time.
The worse crime is to kill someone, you will never
live that down.

When you die you go to your favorite place in life...
Hi my name is John Doe, I live in Hayward, I'm the only person that's different in Hayward. I'm different because I'm a juggalo, a juggalo is a male or female that's down on their luck and don't give a shhh. and still loves everybody until they hate on him. I don't like to fight but if I'm put in that place I will do it.

-John Doe

From The Beat: The wisest person can see the need for love even in their enemy; sometimes the people who hate on us are just dealing with their own pain and insecurities...We're glad you know it's okay for a man to cry at any time.

Going Home

What it do-do
this Young Sticky

I go to court tomorrow the 21st
I think I'm going home to Newark.

My mom says it's looking good
my PO say they don't have nothing to hold me
plus they dropped my violation for kicking it with
my homeboys

and my PO is telling the court to send me home
I am almost out the door.

To all you keeping it solid "keep on keeping on"
"it nothing," you all will be home soon.

Stay solid

-Young Sticky

From The Beat: Good luck at court—we hope if you get out you're ready to stay out. Otherwise you'll be back in this mess of a system.

Life

What up homeboys, this is Lil' Soldier from Hayward writing a little something to keep you informed about what's happening.

Well today was a good day. Yesterday I had an interview with my PO, and I must say she was kind of rude. She just told me that I most likely got to do six months in camp. She told me she didn't think I could go home. She said 'cause I run all the time. I said, well that's messed up. She said she didn't care

Well peep this... I just found out that the Hayward police are trying to get me for a stabbing that happened in Hayward. They said it's a very serious case. They told me I'm the lead suspect. They came and interviewed me a couple days ago and showed me a lot of pictures. They were trying to say it was me, but homeboy had a different hairstyle, and I never had that look in my life. So right off the bat I knew it wasn't me. So I'm trying to beat that case now. I'm stressing but at the same time I'm not 'cause I know I didn't do it. I'm innocent.

Well yeah, that's what's been going on in my life. I got to go to court on the 28th to see what's really going to happen to me. I'm praying I hit the streets so I can be back on the block doing my thang you feel me. Well that's that. I'm gone for now, 'till next time. 'Till pencil meets paper, late!

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: It's too bad you're being investigated for something you didn't do, but we wonder about what you would be doing if you were back on the block doing your thing. Maybe if you thought of something different to do on the outs you would be able to stay out. From your writing it sounds to us like you are not ready to return home and live right, too bad.

What It Do Beat

Yeah, this ya boy Kionte up in this unit, man I'm still up in this here but I only got two more weeks up in here 'till I hit the house.

Oh yeah, you know I'm about to do it so big. I'm gonna be nineteen in a minute. I've been down too long looking at these hall walls.

-Kionte

From The Beat: 19—does that mean if you get caught up again you'll be tried as an adult? We hope it doesn't come to that. We hope doing it big, means going to school and being responsible.

My Ninjas

This is your boy Lil' Tuttie and this
Is to my ninjas

You know your boy is locked up
In Juvenile Hall but still got love

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: You'll have love for those you care deeply about forever. But don't let that love keep you down, rise up and be somebody other than the youngsta that found himself caught up in the system! You make the change you will give hope to your loving homies too!

Okay To Cry

The time I felt it was ok to cry is when I found out my two big homies got shot. To me that was a time to cry because I known them all my life and I was sad. But I didn't cry because it wouldn't have made no difference because they weren't comin' back.

-Aliton B2

From The Beat: Sometimes crying relieves our pain, our anger, or our sadness. You said it wouldn't have made a difference if you cried or not when two of your homies got shot, but it probably would have made you feel better to let your emotion out. (By the way, The Beat would like it better if you didn't answer all three topics, but just concentrated on one so that you could write in more detail. Thanks.)

Real Smiles, Fake Smiles

You just can tell a real smile from a fake smile like you can just tell when somebody playing it off. You can just feel it in your heart.

Out Of Control

Going dumb, stupid, hyphy means going dumb, basically getting out of control and acting a fool. It is a feeling like 'cause you might be high or drunk or something. I went dumb when I was high off them grapes. It got me in trouble because I start acting a fool and breaking shhh and stuff like that. My thoughts on the Bay Movement is that we need to keep the Bay Movement going. Don't stop, ya heard me.

-Torrell B2

From The Beat: Since it got you into trouble before, will you ever go dumb again? (The Beat would like it better if you chose just one topic to write about instead of all three. That way we can really get to know what you're thinking.)

Torture Is The Worst Crime

I think the worst crime a person can commit is torturing somebody. Man, you could die hella ways and you know you go die, but they makin' you suffer wit' the pain and everything.

Another worst crime is murder 'cause if you get caught, you ass is chalk. B.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: This is the first time we've read "torture" as the worst crime, but we think you've made an excellent point. What do you think about the charges that American military people have tortured some prisoners of war in the different countries where we're holding them?

It's All In The Vibe

How ya boy can tell from a fake smile and a real one is the vibe. Mess wit' real, never fake.

-Marcus LCRS

From The Beat: Good advice. You just trust your gut, feelings, intuition, right? You go!

Murder's The Worst

The worst crime a person can commit is if they kill someone or stab someone.

-Lina GU

From The Beat: Why?

A Real One From One That Is Fake

People always smile in your face, but always won't take your place. I feel the real smile from the fake smiles. It's my instinct that I feel. When a real person that I feel is speaking real to me, then I realize that it is real. When a fake person is speaking to me, I feel t off top that it is fake.

When I had went to court the judge had said hi to me, but it was her job to speak and act nice to me. She was fake and being me, I feel fakeness because I can feel the real from the fake. I can be fake too.

-Young Mika'z GU

From The Beat: Do you think your instinct is ever wrong? Do you ever make the mistake of trusting that fake smile or dismissing that real one? We like your example of the judge's fake smile, but how do you know she didn't like for real?

The Real From The Fake

I could tell when a person is fake, because they be on that other, like when you see them by theself they speak, then the next time you see them an' they with they flends, they don't speak. That be straight phony shhhh. And I try to stay away from the phony ones 'cause I don't be on no phony or fake shhh. That just ain't me.

If I'm feeling you I'm feeling you. If I ain't feeling you, then I ain't. No matter where we at or who around. I don't do the phony, fake shhh at all.

-Muck GU

From The Beat: You mean you never put on a front for any reason? Have you ever seen someone being fake, but you understood the reasons and thought it was okay?

Where's My Money?

My first time lying to my friend was when I bought a car and told him that I will give him his money. He said, "All right."

When the day came, he asked me, "Where my money?" I said, "You will get yo' money on the thirty-third." When I seen him again, I said, "You not getting yo' money," and he got mad. I said to myself, "He will get over it."

-Marcus B1

From The Beat: So, basically you stole your friend's car (you got it on a promise to pay that you didn't keep), and then you lied to him! So our question is, why should he get over it? What gave you the right to do him wrong and then tell him to get over it? Have you ever heard the expression, "Burning your bridges?" If you treat your friends this way, how will they treat you when you really need them? Think about how you would feel if the tables were turned...

Aggression

When I got clapped at, my heart loves to pound, so I have a reason to pull out my pistol and start emptying rounds.

If I ain't strapped I'ma have o duck and hit the ground.

Now I hear sirens comin', I'm on the run now I also love that adrenaline when you run through somebody's crib, searchin' through hella drawers until your pockets fill.

What bothers me the most is when you and your homie got caught, while you sittin' in the interrogation room, your homie is in one of the narc's office about to snitch.

Ain't that some shhh!

-Big Daddy Uce

From the Beat: One of the problems with being strapped is that you begin looking for a reason to pull out your pistol — and since you're looking, you're finding what you look for. What we wish you could see is how many of the victims of gun violence were also packin', but that didn't prevent them from becoming victims. Before they fell, they thought the same way you do now — they justified a life of robbing people for things they didn't earn and had no right to take, and they thought their guns protecting them when they got into shoot-outs with rivals or the police. After they fell, they thought and said nothing! Forever!

I'm Mad, Hella Mad

I'm hella mad, yup, yup 'cause my lawyer lied to me. He said I was going back to the same group home and that they were going to pick me up in two weeks, but when that group home came to talk to me, I asked did they call my lawyer up and they said, "No, we never called yo' lawyer." But he called me up and asked when they were going to pick me up... So that's hella messed up.

So anyways, I been her for two and a half months and they are playin' me real bad. But I have court on the 21st of June and I ain't leavin' (so sad), but what I'm going to do is wait for a different group home...

Well, well as I'm in here, I have a roommate so we doin' 'coo', just kickin' it and playin' (cards in our room) and talking 'bout hella shhh. Well, that's all I got to say and have a good day. Good night and sweet dreams to everyone.

-Lil' Shadow GU

From The Beat: There's an old saying that when life gives you a lemon, try to make lemonade. It sounds like you are doing just that, making the most out of a bad situation by passing the time with your roommate. We can't know what made your lawyer tell you something that turned out to be wrong, but maybe it wasn't a lie, only a mistake.

He Stole My Screen Name

I had this one friend I trusted. He was my best friend. One day my friends called me asking why I be talking smack on A.I.M. I told them how could I talk smack online when I am not even at home? I was really mad wondering who broke into my screen name.

One day I went to my best friend's house for a B.B.Q. That's when I found out he broke into my screen name. I saw him typing smack to my friends. I was heated. I was going to whip his ass, but I wanna know wassup, so I asked him. He told me his cousin broke into it. Then I cracked him in the head and left.

-Weapon X B4

From The Beat: We don't think cracking anyone on the head solves much in the long run, even though it sounds like he deserved it. Have you spoken to him since this happened? Why do you think he wanted to talk smack to your friends, and make them think it was coming from you?

Guns

What's up Beat? Man it's yo' boy Daddy Menace here to talk about why I choose my life by the guns. Man I chose my life about guns because them punk-ass ninjas took my big bra from me. I got at his homie that I wanted to go and take two of them. Ever since then I been bangin' and I ain't gon stop for nobody.

-Menace B2

From The Beat: You're stopped now, aren't you? And, as you should know from the loss of your brother, it's so easy to be stopped permanently! An eye for an eye, huh? If everyone was to do the same thing or live by this saying, when do you think the killing will stop? It won't. They got your big brother, you go get them, then they come back for you, then you or your homie go back for them... When is it ever going to stop? When there's nothing left but mothers and fathers with tears rolling down their faces as they remember their lost son or brother to the streets?

Doing Whatever You Feel

The Bay movement is about going dumb, stupid, and hyphy. When those words come to mind, I think of feelin' myself at a party giggin', doin' whatever you feel like doin'. And off top, Bay boys do it the best. Nobody does it like us. We is just so unique.

Before I was sent here to the halls, I was at a party on one, getting stewie, really going dumb, getting stupid off da chain hyphy. I was not trippin' off nobody. I was the only factor at the party, and if anybody got in my way, it's a wrap.

-Aaron

From The Beat: How much alcohol is consumed when you're getting stewie? What's the point of getting so "off da chain hyphy" that you are a threat to anyone in your way?

Goin' Stupid, Dumb And Hyphy

Goin' dumb stupid hyphy means to me feeling myself dancing, doin' dumb dance moves but making it look good. It is a way of life to me. I go dumb. I go dumb stupid and hyphy at parties, when I'm high or drunk. Doing all these things while being in the streets has got me in a lot of trouble. I have been into fights, jumping people, robbing people. That's got me locked up, going dumb stupid and hyphy.

Going dumb stupid or hyphy is not ridiculous to me. To kids it's a way of life. It gets you in the mood to have fun. I think if we did not go stupid dumb or hyphy, a lot of us would not be having fun as much as we do when we are doing things like that.

I am actually pretty happy that we have this Bay Area movement. It keeps me occupied on the outs.

-Lil' Hitta B4

From The Beat: You are right, the Bay Area movement does have a good side to it as far as the music goes and the unity behind it, yet the careless attitude it creates has been a down fall for many, including yourself. The Beat wants to know if you get into trouble — like fights, jumping people, robbing people — even when you're not going dumb stupid hyphy.

Naturally Hyphy

Hyphy mean to me fun and doing what you want to do, like shake yo' dreads, even though I don't have no dread. Some people need to get drunk or pop a pill, but I don't need to pop a pill or drink. I have natural hyphyness. That's why I like going hyphy.

-Marcus B1

From The Beat: It's good that you are content with going hyphy naturally. But tell us how you act when you go hyphy? How do you shake those dreads that you don't have?

Going Stupid, Going Dumb, Going Hyphy

Going dumb retarded and stupid is like different stages of excitement or joy. It's just a way of life in the Bay Area that has only evolved around the Bay, so that's why most people don't understand.

Once on the weekend, me and like ten other guys were in two different cars, five persons each, and we was going so stupid dumb and hyphy, that my friend was out of the passenger door, and the police got behind him and he said to us, "There ain't nothing wrong with dancing on the car."

-Ej B4

From The Beat: Going dumb while driving is not only dumb (truly), it puts a lot of people's lives in danger for no reason but foolishness. So we can't agree with your friend's thinking. At the same time, dancing when you're not in a car, in any style you and the Bay have evolved, sounds great!

Three Strikes

I'm back again for the third time. I feel like a dumb ass! I had to be stupid and catch another case. I left the people that love me for some people that aren't even my home boys! That's some shhh, 'cause family is always first.

I also left another and that's ma girl, Smilez. She's ma all. I miss her 'cause she's the only one that has been there for me when I need her. But she ain't gotta worry 'cause I'll be out sooner or later. I love her and miss her

-Payaso SF B2

From The Beat: When you get out this time, we hope you will remember what you wrote this day, because what you said is all true, family always come first and you have left those that love you behind. So next time before you act, think about your family and girl. Maybe then you will be able to straighten up and avoid the trouble. After three times, it becomes pretty clear that you know what gets you here, so you also know what keeps you out of here. Yes, you'll be out sooner or later... and we hope we never read a piece from you that begins, "I'm back again for the 4th time..."

Going Stupid Dumb And Hyphy

Goin dumb to me is a way of life. Everybody does it and I think it will be around for a long time. And me, I go dumb every time I'm at a party, because the atmosphere and people who have dreads to me go the dumbest because that's the style of the hyphy movement. When I go dumb I just feel it and that means hyphy.

-Lil D-Tay B4

From The Beat: Do bad things ever happen at those parties where you go hyphy, or is it all good?

Out Soon

I think I might get out soon. I'm going to do good when I get out. I'm going to go to school and not rob or beat people up, or smack people with brooms. Cito gone stay with smoking purple. Grapes calm me down. Without it, I don't know what I'm going to do. I might end up back in jail. Grapes Cito out.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: So is it fair to say that since you are in there without grapes, you don't know what to do or what's going on? We're not going to lecture you about smoking weed except to say that you're body and brain are still developing, and marijuana can affect their development. But it is the rest of your promise that interests us — going back to school and staying out of trouble. That sounds like Cito is using Cito's brain!

I Can't Trust People

People hate on me. They talk behind my back. When I come out my cell and ask what you say, you say nothing. So I can't even trust people.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: How do you know they were talking about you when you were in your cell? We had to take out the last two lines because it was a straight threat, which we don't permit in The Beat.

Lies

The lies that have been told to me were that if I try my hardest to improve my schoolwork I would get what I want. When I actually tried, I got a 2.5 GPA and I didn't get anything.

If I tried my hardest I could've got what I wanted. I think if I could've tried hardest, I could've gotten a 4.0

-Kenneth B2

From The Beat: You have already seen that when you put out effort, you can get results. Next time Kenneth, try even harder and we bet you will get a 4.0.

Chilling And Hoping

'S'up Beat? I just went to court. I pleaded to two misdemeanors, and they dismissed my other case. Well, the DA tryin' to send me away. Right now I gotta wait for my PO recommendation and that about it. I'm just chilling hoping to get out. I got court next Friday 23rd.

Peace out.

-Lil' E B2

From The Beat: We are very sad to have to see you once again the halls Lil' E. You were doing so good at one time, working at our office and doing good at school. What happened? We thought you were a good and a wise kid, someone that learns from his mistakes. Were we wrong?

Lie

What does lie mean to me? Lie means to me is some one you trust and they don't tell the truth. That means a lie. Plenty people lied to me and they are my best friends. Once my friend was taking me somewhere and I thought he was going somewhere close to the area, but it was too far and he wasted my time. I had to be at home. I had curfew, so I got so mad and frustrated. So I never talked to him. But we resolved it in school. We almost got in a fight, but we still resolved it.

-Yazid B4

From The Beat: Well, it does seem like one of those lies that isn't worth losing a friend over, so we're glad that you two were able to resolve it before it got too out of hand.

Going Dumb Stupid Hyphy

When I go dumb I go dumb. When I get hyphy I get hyphy. Ninja don't know how dumb I go. I go stupid. Going dumb is when you go bad on people.

-Thomas B2

From The Beat: And by going bad on people, you're proving exactly what? Does going dumb have anything to do with being in this dumb place?

Stupid, Dumb And Hyphy

Those three words to me all equals to retarded. Which all of us in here are. 'Cause if we weren't we would not be here. We all went stupid dumb and hyphy one time, maybe more than a lot, 'cause it sound tight, cool, and lovely to our ears. I love this hyphy movement and just hearing it makes me want to go dumb. Other people hear it they want to have fun with guns...

One time I went stupid dumb and hyphy, and ended up beatin' up three people that I'm beefin' wit' on a bus that got cameras, and didn't know those three young dudes have bangas. So I beat they ass and hopped of the bus going dumb, tripped over my homie and almost broke his thumb. I could have got shot doin' that movement, but I'm the one doin' the choosin'. So I got up being the bigger man. First, I walked a block, hit the corner and ran.

-Grimmy B4

From The Beat: Basically you solved your own problem. Or did you? Going dumb can easily lead up to something stupid, which may leave you in a situation such as the one you're in right now, feeling retarded. When you got off the bus "going dumb," what did you look like?

Going Dumb

Going dumb is a way of life. Having a fat stack, racks in yo pocket. Having a fat Buick scraper on 22", you eatin' B. Going dumb is a way of life. It has been incorporated as a way of life. If you don't understand the hyphy movement then you ain't real. Going dumb ain't never got me caught up.

Hop on this hyphy movement. Us stars be on the block going dumb, shaking our dreads with fat purple chops lit up. Scrapin' up the block, four doors open, hanging out the window shaking yo' dreads. The block keeping lit right now riding for the dead and for the living.

Going dumb is what it is. If you ain't with it, then stay from around me, ya heard.

-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: You celebrate going dumb without telling us what it is. Define the lifestyle you're living while going dumb. If you said going dumb is a way of life, has that way of life got you where you are today? Do you think you'll always feel the same? If you read what you wrote ten or twenty years from now, how will it sound to you?

Do Da Furly Ghost

Check this out maine. Going stupid, hyphy, and dumb is all a movement of the Bay. It's just a way we hard hittas from the Bay express ourselves when we feel lovely. Like we go dumb we express ourselves, we dance how we want, any kinda style. We just do what we feel and dance from our sprits. That's why we do the furly ghost like ooh my God!

-Dutch B2

From The Beat: So going dumb, hyphy, and stupid is just the way youngsters express themselves these days? Or is it only youngsters from the Bay? We really like the idea of dancing in whatever style you feel at the time.

Don't Tread On Me

People be tryin' to play Cito, but its coo' 'cause Cito gonna play ya when he serve the food you be eatin', so you betta watch who you messin' wit' 'cause you don't know what they're capable of.

I'm a real coo' person. I don't mess wit' no one, but if you mess wit' me, I'ma mess wit' you. Cito out.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Take a deep breath, Cito, and relax. You're doing too good to mess it all up by reacting to some childish provocation. We almost didn't print this because it comes close to a threat, but we wanted a chance to urge you to think about what's really important in your life, and focus on that.

Hustle

Hustle I know hustle runs in my family and in my blood line. Whenever my family hustle I feel like I can hustle too when my mom hustle. Hustle is my blood line. Like my friend said, one word of advice: if you don't grind you shine.

-Yazid B4

From The Beat: How far back in your family's history do you want to look for other traits that are in your bloodline? You are just following what you see in your immediate family, but we bet if you knew your family's true history, you would find artists, thinkers, writers, maybe even chiefs or kings! We have our own advice for you (and your friend): You did grind/And now you find/You're locked behind/Thick walls with a prison mind!

What Happens When You Die

I don't know if you go to hell or heaven, but if one of those things is real I would want to go to heaven. I would want to go to heaven so I could have everlasting life.

-Aliton B2

From The Beat: What do you think that heaven is like if it exists? What do you think would determine whether a person ends up in heaven or in hell?

In My Blood

Yeah, it's in my blood. Myself and family, we all thugs hustlers and pimps. My dad is a thug, hustler, and a pimp. So are my cousins. They all in the beef, thuggin' and shhhh. They was thuggin' so hard they locked up and these marks out there snitching on my fambam.

I was grinding so hard and starting to get harder in this beef movement. I was messing up in school and missing PO calls looking for them ninjas. When I came to court, they kept me. But when I touch down you know it don't stop.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Well, if it doesn't stop for you when you touch down, then we hope you are prepared for more of the same results — giving up your freedom to a bunch of strangers telling you when to go to the bathroom! That the life you are prescribing for your future simply because you have accepted the patterns of your family; you have chosen to follow instead of to lead, and we're afraid you'll be following those in your family who have already gone to prison. Only a fool would think he could do the same kinds of things without facing the same kind of consequences. Are you a fool?

I Can Trust My Girl

When I first met my girl, I didn't trust her at all 'cause I keep it real. Most females ain't shhhh! They can get a ninja killed and I had to learn dat da hard way. So when I would mess wit' a female she would know off top I ain't gonna fall in love or trust her.

But my chick right now is down for a ninja. She lied to the PO for me. She pretended to be moms when I missed my curfew calls and when she risked her freedom for me on some shhhh I can't speak of. That's when I knew this the one for me.

-Lil' Cal B2

From The Beat: Sounds like you have finally found yourself someone you can trust and be with. Congratulations. We hope you will cherish this girl, but remember, it doesn't matter how down a girl is for you, if you are locked up most of the time, sooner or later she will get fed up. All human being have their limits. (We hope you learned, too, that it doesn't matter what a person's sex is, both men and women can be honorable or dishonorable. It simply depends on the individual.)

Adrenaline In My Body

What makes my heart beat faster is the adrenaline going through my body veins. My heart beats faster when 5-0 is on my tail messing around and end up in jail — unit B4, green shirt, kaki pants and sandals where ninjas got handles. The food is nasty. There's Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Usos. No harassment. Even though haters are around you, man up, dirt 'em off your shoulders, and stand up and show 'em who you are, show 'em you can make it far.

-Carlos B4

From The Beat: How far do you want to make it, Carlos? How are you planning to get there from here?

On My Block

On my block it goes down. ME and ninjas is shady. We go dumb, we be messin' with the females. We be going to Oakland and hittin' parties. We be smokin' and chillin' on the weed.

I been locked up for a minute, but I'm going to get out soon. Once I get out this group home and hit the streets, I'ma do what I got to do to get out of probation and go back to school. I just want to go home and go back to the block.

-Carlos B2

From The Beat: Sounds like a good plan — except for that part about going back to the block. You may think that you can have it all — school, no probation and your homies on the block — but that's a balancing act that no one can keep up for long. We hope you will focus on school, and don't hang out in the same places and with the same people that put you here to begin with.

DA Worst Lie Of My Life

Yeah, I've been lied to hell a times, but the lie that affected me the most was when this girl I was messin' with for a few months got pregnant a few days after we knocked boots. That shhhh scared the hell outta me.

She told me I was the only one she had been with, so like a dummy I believed and was there for her for nine and a half months. But when the baby was born, I just walked outta the delivery room 'cause the baby was black as hell and I'm light skin, so I asked for a DNA test and the baby wasn't mine.

-Lil' Cal B2

From The Beat: Yes, that is a big lie, but we wonder why you put yourself in that position in the first place by having unprotected sex? Since it's clear that your girl was having sex with others, when you don't protect yourself, it's like you're having sex with all her partners — and whatever they might have passed to her she will pass to you! As to the question of creating a baby when you're still going in and out of jail, it is truly irresponsible! If it had been your baby, where would the baby's father be right now? We're impressed that you were willing to take responsibility if the baby was yours, which shows maturity on your part, but we'd like to see that sense of responsibility show itself earlier in the process.

Bothered

What bothers me is when I feel I'm getting played, and when I know Cito 'bout to get that girl on da outs. What bothers me is I know I'm 'bout to do some dumb shhhh, but I really don't care. You wanna play me, I'ma play you. You keep knockin' on dat door, Cito fit to answer...

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Once again, Cito, we worry that you can lose what you've built up by responding in ways that could make your progress out of here and back into the world that much more difficult. Keep you eyes on the prize!

My Heart Beats Fast

What makes my heart beat faster? What makes my heart start beating faster is when I'm running from the yo's or up on that car selling them hubba rocks.

But one day me and the homies was scrapin' and we both got some trees, purple ya heard me and got in a high speed chase and was running the yo's and my lil' bra wrapped and tried to get further. They pulled out cannons and we got caught. I ran my manip my mouth peace and they let us go. The whole time I thought something really bad was gonna happen.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: If they had fired their cannons at you and your lil' bra, your mouth piece wouldn't have done any good. Just reading this makes our hearts beat faster — and make us grateful not to be on the highway at the same time as you!

What Botherers Me

The ninjas in juvenile hall bother me. Everything they do bugs me. When they badger me, ask me for stuff, or when they do things to annoy me. I just get annoyed real easy. When I get annoyed, I also get angry. I tend to wanna start a fight.

I control my anger though. I could have got into a lot of fights. I know when to fight and when not to fight. I'm smart and strong and know what to do when it comes to beef.

I feel threatened. I'm so mad. I'm sick of these shady staff on my back, on my line rushing me to do things. These staff ain't cool. They get at my ninja foul when he feel threatened. I feel threatened. It gets me so mad when I think about it.

-BJ B4

From The Beat: We don't like to see you get this angry, Billy, because the consequences of losing your temper when you're in lock-up can be very serious. Being able to control your anger is a very great accomplishment, and if you've learned to do it in here, then you can also do it out there. It's time to find another way than fighting.

What Am I Feeling?

I feel upset with my real dad.
I feel confused with my mom and step dad.
I feel like I messed up in life.
I feel that I'm a still gonna do drugs.
I feel like I'm going to be something in life.
I feel like all my prayers will be answered.
I feel when I find my soul I'll be a success in everything.
I feel there's no hope for me.
(To be continued)

-Yin Yang B4

From The Beat: You have a lot of conflicting feelings, like your prayers will be answered, but also that there's no hope for you. If you want to change, then there's hope for you. What do you pray for? Besides prayer, what other avenues of self-help are you pursuing? Are you truly planning to do anything differently when you touch down? We sure hope so, because we hate to see you in here!

Getting Mad

What makes my heart beat is when I get mad, when somebody is hatin' on the player and they should really be hatin' on the game. What makes my heart beat is when I wanna crack somebody with a broom or something to get my anger out, but I can't. Also when I get played out my pimp status over some bs.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Do you know what we find most interesting in this short burst of anger, Cito? It's that you have found a way to control it! (Wanting to bust someone over the head but knowing that you can't is the proof of that control.) Can you continue to employ these effective strategies when you are free, and there is no one but you telling you what the consequences are?

Craving Rush

Stealing used to make my heart beat, but after stealing a lot, it got boring. So I started to fight and mob people. You know the line: forget one-on-one... ten-on-one!

More and more I crave for rush, so I started to steal cars. Then I started stripping it. That's why I'm here. I also like shooting. That's the best rush. The worst rush is running from the 5-0.

I started from little stuff to top-dog stuff.

-Weapon X B4

From The Beat: And now the top dog is locked up in the dog pound with a keeper telling him when to pee! If you continue to get your heart beating in the same way you've been doing it, then we don't think you've come close to experiencing the worst rush yet. What you're living in this kennel gives you just a taste...

No Way To Know

"How do you determine a real smile from a one that is fake?" You cant. We have a lot of fake people now. I had a lot of people who I trusted but proved to me that I couldn't trust them.

So after being lied to a lot, I just stopped trusting people. It takes a lot of time and you got to prove to me that I can trust you. And it's so easy to lose my trust, then it's gone be hard to earn it back.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: We don't believe you really stopped trusting people, Princess, but rather that as you gain experience about people, you've learned to reserve judgment about them until they've shown themselves to be one thing or another. Of course it takes a lot of time to begin to trust someone, but life gives us all the time we need, and we feel sure you're going to find someone to trust who actually deserves it.

Feeling Alone

I feel all by myself most of the time. My folks always tell me that life is not a game. So when you out there on the block taking death chances always think. I ain't nothing without my nuts. I got to stand on my two feet. I don't look to ground. It ain't nothing down there but dust. I keep head to the sky and my back to the world. I don't put my trust in a female. They talk too much. I got to have money in my hand.

-Smack B4

From The Beat: It doesn't appear to us that your strategies for success have been working for you. You say you've got to have money in hand, but where you are, no amount of money will buy you better clothes, better food, or better staff. We admire you for not looking down and not taking chances, but just putting yourself out there on the money grind is taking chances — as your current "home away from home" should remind you.

Just Checking In

What's up Beat Within? Me, nuttin' much. Just up in YGC daydreamin' about how good life was out there in the world. I wasn't messin' up. I was out there handlin' business on my own. But I'm still on probation, so they locked me up.

I miss you Chris, and I love you. I have court on the 22nd so hopefully I be out 'cause I got money to make if I want my dreams to come true.

-Manha GU

From The Beat: You left out a critical detail in your story. You were doing good, you weren't messing up, you were handling business — but they locked you up 'cause you're still on probation? We don't know what your violation was, but it worries us when we see all responsibility shifted to others. As for the money you have to make in order for your dreams to come true, we hope you see that the fast track to that goal leads here! Go to school; prepare yourself for earning a living — and the money will follow.

Ride For Me, I'll Ride For You

You ride for me, I'll ride for you.
The feelings I have can't hide from you.
From beginning to the end our love will be true,
and never again baby I'll make you blue,
or will I make you black with emotional attack.
In this love I won't lack, and baby that's a fact.
I love you so much, I miss lovin' yo' clutch.

I miss you so much, I miss feelin' yo' touch.
You stood wit' me baby when times got rough.
My lovin' ain't no bluff, like a coward actin' tough.
Until that day I remain wit' you,
you ride for me, and I'll ride for you.

-Uso Grimmy B4

From The Beat: You'll be with her before too long/ singing and hearing that sweet love song/and choices you make will determine for how long...

My Mom Lied

I been told a lot of lies before, but I try not to let them hurt me. The lie that hurt me the most and I believed for a while when somebody special to me went to jail. When I asked my mom where he was, my mom told me he was sick so he couldn't come see me.

I finally found out the truth after three months of hearing this bs. So finally my mom told me. I was really hurt 'cause I trusted my mom to tell me the truth about everything, and I wouldn't've even got mad or anything.

Damn, I just wanted to know where the man was at.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: Of course, we don't know the circumstances that led your mother to lie to you, but we can imagine somewhere we would understand the lie. If you were the mother and not the daughter, could you understand that there might be times you would want to protect your daughter from the truth? Maybe she was wrong to do it, but maybe her heart was in the right place.

The Licks

On the outs I'm steady hitting licks.
In the back of my mind I know it ain't right.
I'm doing it just to get my BO's tight
But damn, that's just the material shhh.
Now I'm in a jail cell using a hygiene kit!
Damn! I'ma change a little bit.

The system is real and this ain't no skit.

-Rebel B4

From The Beat: It's not just in the back of your mind that you know hitting licks is not right. The legacy of your Abyssinian ancestry puts that knowledge at the front of your mind, so it's time to bring your behavior in line with your thinking. Otherwise, all the wisdom you possess will not help you escape this self-contributing slavery.

Gun-Toting Brady Bunch

How could I get out of here and don't come back? It's hard being out and you want to fit in with the Brady Bunch. So when you get offered a gun, do you take it? 'Cause if you don't, then you're labeled as a sucka. No one want to be a sucka, so you grab da banga.

When you got the heat, it's da one thing the PoPos want. What go through your head when the boys deep up on you and you got the heat? All I am saying, the boys got it too, ya dig?

-Anonymous B4

From The Beat: We don't know anyone who's packing who fits in with the Brady Bunch! But if the Brady Bunch you want to fit in with carries guns, then what is it you're fitting in with? Yes, it's hard being out there and not doing what so many others are doing. But it's also hard giving up your freedom... or your life, especially for those left behind.

Group Home

Man, my time need to be up so I can get out of the group home. I been there for hella long. They keep saying I better do this so I can get out. Then I do it and I still in the group home.

I miss my mom and my sisters and brothers and my man and my friend's and I want to get out the group home.

-Swiss Mama GU

From the Beat: Can you give us some examples of the things the Group Home asked you to do that you did but they still didn't let you out? Did something else happen to make them change their minds? Can they give you a step-by-step plan for you so you will know exactly what you must accomplish to go home?

Wondering

My mind is wondering right now. It's thinking about Exes, life and when I get out and what's real. I'm wondering what's going on out there while I'm locked up right now. I wonder what the homies are doing and how my family is doing.

I just have flashbacks about my ex's life and what I'm gonna do when I get out. I also wonder what my friends are wondering, where I am and why I am not answering my phone. Lately they probably trippin' but I don't care. When I get out I'll tell all what happened. Until that day comes, I'll holla back late.

-Bj B4

From The Beat: Wondering is good, Billy. It gives you time to think things through and decide what's important and what's not. What your friends think is not nearly as important as what you think — and what changes you know you're going to make when you're out there in order to live your life among people who love you.

Real From Fake

Real from fake... You can tell somebody from real when they all in your face being cool like they your real friend, but they not. Or say you see them somewhere and they wit' somebody else, and act a fool, like they the shhh, and don't care how they act. And the next day they all in your face playing cool and stuff. But you're digging it out like the person is fake like a flea on a dog.

Somebody real is always going to have your back. And, they can be wit' somebody else, and they will leave that person to go mess wit' you, and give them the real smile.

-Shelly-M GU

From The Beat: Do you ever find yourself in situations where you have to be fake, at least somewhat? What do you think makes people put on that front?

I Can Only Trust Me

I feel like the only person I could really trust is myself, other than my moms and my dad. Actually I could trust my sisters and my Bra bra too, because I could tell when they be lyin'!

I feel like I shouldn't trust people who are nice to me and be givin' me that weird-ass vibe, like be fake and smile in people faces but really ain't coo'. People who be fake and smile in people faces but really hate them wit' a passion. In most cases it's always the people who tell me to trust them that I feel like I can't trust from the get go.

I don't know, I always feel like I can't trust nobody because I'm always insecure for my feelings. Feel me.

-Lil' Ma GU

From The Beat: Well, you start by saying you can only trust yourself, but then you quickly add your entire family. That's quite a few trustworthy people in your life. Have you ever had a best friend (or do you have one now) that you trust? Who do you tell your deepest secrets to?

My Dead Homies

What's up with The Beat? This Ireen holding it down up in B3 girls' unit. Man, it's June 2006, and I just can't wait to get out tomorrow to go to my group home in the avenues. But anyways, I been up in here too long.

I heard my ninja Ruben got shot and killed, but I'm not even trippin' 'cause we all we got. So RIP my ninja Ruben.

I'm just going to do my program, and after that go back to the block because we all we got. So all I got to say is RIP to all y'all and save me a spot up there. Y'all will be missed but never forgotten, so get with the movement. Ain't no joy without me, so thank you for sharing my piece. Until we meet next time with The Beat.

-B-Girl GU

From The Beat: We were hoping to read: "I'm just going to do my program, and after that go back to school." That would have been a sign of maturity and the beginning of a plan for not returning here. Instead, you are flitting to go back to the block, a prescription for the same medicine: getting locked up! (Or worse... We're sorry about your friend Ruben...).

What Is The Worst Crime

To me the worst crime to commit is murder. If you murder somebody they ain't coming back, and that will leave the family hurt. So that's why I think murder is the worst crime.

-Aliton B2

From The Beat: We agree that murder is the only crime we can think of that can never be remedied. You can't bring people back from the dead.

chuck

Let me tell you about this boy name Chuck.

He all bout his dough
And always keeping on his toes
I will never ever let that ninja go
Because he always make sure his wify on her toes
And stay keeping me wit' my dough
I will never ever that ninja go
I think he is no game because he is on top and never going to drop

I got love for my ninja, Chuck off top
I will ride to the end because he let me get on top
And I ain't never going to drop

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: If he keeps you on your toes and with some dough... how come you're here? There seems to be an element of denying your circumstances, of describing your life as "on top" when you're in a cage! If you keep on "riding" the way you have, how soon will it be before you reach the end?

Time For Me To Go

Well, let's see. I been up in this joint for almost three months now. Beat. Got played two times about me getting released to a group home. Now they telling me that I'm about to go to another one in Oakland.

Man, I don't even really care. I wanna get outta here. Hopefully they get me soon. They told me that hopefully, some time this week. Hope they ain't playin' me, though.

-Chex B1

From The Beat: We hope you aren't being played, too. But remember, you are confined in one big game that is played against you, to keep you misinformed and confused about your destination in life. But that doesn't mean that you can't be in control of your own destiny. Just be patient and prepare to make the best of wherever you end up at.

Hella Mad!

What's up with you Beat? This is your girl Linda, aka "Lil' One." I'm writing to you from B3.

Man, I'm hella mad! I'm back in a week! I had a warrant out for me because I left the damn group home. I was just with my ninjas and my boyfriend down town, smoking weed and thizzing hella much.

Now I'm locked up here wearing purple and khaki with pink sandals. Man, I'm getting out in two weeks, going to Sacramento, ya feel me. Holla, at Lil' One.

I am going to stay at the group home and complete the program.

-Lil' One GU

from The Beat: We can sure understand why your hella mad! If we had done something as dumb as hanging out downtown with homies, smoking weed and dropping pills when we just got out of juvie jail a week before, we'd be hella mad at ourselves, too! We hope you don't mean that you're mad at the system, because it acted exactly as it promised you that it would. No, responsibility lies squarely with you for this little trip back to lock-up. Was it worth it? We hope when you commit to completing your program at the group home, you can be trusted to keep that promise.

When You Die

First off, I know Wag, Rell and Nitro in heaven for sho' 'cause they didn't deserve to get took out like that. Just was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I guess God called for them to come home. You only guaranteed one thing, and that's to die. I love you Nitro, bra.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: There is so much tragedy that goes on in the streets that we don't know how all of you can take in any more! The deaths of your friends is, of course, tragic. But the desire to get even and create even more death creates a continuing tragedy that we don't seem capable of slowing down. Any suggestions?

How I Think Love Is

Love sometimes feel smooth when it not true
People say that pain is love because they don't have no game

Let me tell how I think love is... when you feel that this person is the one and you got the feeling
But next thing you know this ninja take you off your toes

But you should know if a ninja say he love you and then take you off your toes It's because that ninja ain't got no dough

That ain't no love, that ninja got to get his things and go

But love is the way to go even if a ninja ain't got no dough

Because love ain't no game, you got to let the game go with the flow

Because I don't got love for no 'ho'e

I think I am in love and he the one

But sometimes I think he be playing, son

Just so I can hold his gun

But it is all good

Because I got love for all my homies and the 'hood

But like I said, love is not a game and don't have no shame

Because that how I feel

And if you don't like it you not real

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: Real love begins with loving yourself. You spend so much time telling us about why you love this guy, and about loving your homies and your 'hood, but what about spending some time focusing just on yourself as a young woman. What do you hope to accomplish in life? How do you plan (and we mean PLAN) to achieve your hopes? Are you just waiting for something to happen, or are you in control of your future?

Okay For A Ninja To Cry

I feel it is okay for a ninja to cry when you have to go to yo' homie's funeral after you were just with him. I feel it is ok to cry when yo' big bra just got killed and yo' moms goes back to smokin' dat shhh. I feel it is ok to cry when you see yo' moms smoking crack in yo' face like you ain't in her face. I feel it is ok to cry when you want to go home and chill wit' yo' main chick. These are the reasons I feel it is ok for a ninja to cry.

-Lil' Cal B2

From The Beat: Lil' Cal, you gave all the reasons for when it is okay to cry. Are there times or situations when it is not okay to cry? We're all humans and we all cry, right, so why do you think we are taught that it's wrong for boys to cry?

Why I love My Baby Daddy

I love the way he look

I love the way he holds me

I love the way he care

I love the way he take care of me

I love his name

I love how he tell me what to do

I love how he smell

I love how when I'm sad he care

I love how when somebody calls me out my name

He'll say something

I love how he just love me

I love when he say

He going to take care of what he's making

I love that he is doing what he said

I love that he is there when I'm in here

That's why I love my Baby Daddy

Quincy, you already know

So hate it or love it

Girls go do it movin'

Ladies, that's mine!

-Jeannie GU

From The Beat: Sounds like you've found a fine, decent man who loves you and doesn't mistreat you. We don't know what you did to give up your freedom, but whatever it was, we think it was mighty foolish to allow the system to take you away from someone as caring as Quincy sounds. Next time, maybe you'll think of him first.

I'm Back Again

I'm back again doin' some time
I messed up by committing a crime
Now I'm stuck in here looking at four raggedy
walls
Nowhere to go but up and down some dirty-ass
halls
Just 'cause I was stupid and caught anotha case
Now my family don't even wanna look at ma face
When I go to my room
I think about all the things I do

-Payaso B2

From The Beat: If seems like you have started something good and never got the chance to finish it. From what you have written so far, it shows that you have learnt from your mistakes and realize who you have hurt the most through your actions. We hope you can finish this and share with us more — and that we never have to read a piece from you that begins, "I'm back again..."

Dear Life

Dear Life:

I know you have been good to me. But still I treat you wrong. This is how I feel: life is hard and death's her husband. I will learn to treat you with more respect. I took you for granted and got you snatched by these white people, but don't trip. I'll be back for you. I'm out fa now. I have to get my life back.

- M-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: What are you going to do to make it up to your life when you get out? Or how you are going to make sure it doesn't get taken away again? (By the way, The Beat would like it if you wrote on only one topic in more detail than just a few lines on all the topics. Thanks.)

Okay To Cry

I feel it's alright to cry whenever you feel it's necessary to cry. Personally I feel it's necessary to cry when you're angry.

-Chuck Cheese B4

From The Beat: It's ok to cry whenever you feel the need to do so. Crying is a way of relief when you are stressed or even angry. Some people just don't have enough heart to drop a tear and would much rather hold their feelings in until something happens and they explode at the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong person.

I Cry When Someone Dies

It is ok to cry when someone die. That when I cry because when my grandmother died, I cry for a long time because she was my favorite grandmother and she was the only grandmother I was close to. She was there for me when I needed her, and if I had a question she was there to answer it if she had the answer.

I loved her cooking. I used to help her cook every time she cook something. She even open up her kitchen to anybody who was hungry. She had a kind heart — the kindest woman you can ever meet, and when she passed away that broke my heart very much, and I didn't know what to do. But I had to go on with my life. I know she's up in heaven watching over me and she's my guardian angel, and I will always

remember her. I over you grandma!!

-Dre Doojah B5

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your grandmother. It sounds like she was a remarkable woman. If she were able to come back and sit with you for a few minutes, what do you think she would tell you about your life? What can you do on the outs to honor her memory and live up to her expectations for you? What kinds of things did you and she cook?

The Worst Crime Is Murder

To me the worst crime you can commit is murder because you're taking the life of somebody's kid and someone's parent. And the punishment should depend on how the person killed the victim. I think a person has to be mental or someone had to do something real bad to them or to a family member for someone to kill another person. I would ask them why they did it and tell that person that he is a stupid idiot.

-Keese B2

From The Beat: Do you think teenagers who kill over colors, turf, or drugs are stupid idiots? We like that fact that often bad things have happened to people who then do bad things themselves. We wish more people in the criminal justice system would look at some of those earlier conditions of childhood before judging the grown man (or woman) who commits that crime.

Child Molestation

The worst crime is child molestation because that is somebody's kid. It's not cool to rape somebody.

I think it is afterlife when you die because I believe in God.

It's ok to cry when you are in a good place like this.

-Darius B2

From The Beat: We wish you would write more on just one of these topics and not on all three. When you just give us one or two sentences on all these topics, we can't get a feel for what you think or how you reasoned it out. For example, why isn't murder the worst crime? After all, the victim is also somebody's kid, and it's not cool to murder somebody...

Untitled

I think if a man kills a man he should get a long time in jail. I think he or she should get a long time in jail for life. I think he should get raped by a man that is bigger than him.

I hope he gets hit in the mouth with a tray at lunch and his teeth come out and when he pick up his teeth he will get kicked in the ass.

-C-M B2

From The Beat: What a kind-hearted person you must be! When you call for rape as a punishment for anything, you're putting yourself in the same category as all those people out there who think young people who break the law should be locked up for a long time! Do you know anyone who has committed the crime of murder? Do you want them to be raped?

Worst Crimes

W'at up, Beat, w'at it do? This that insane-ass vato, Goof-Troop.

Well writing about the susbject "What is the worst crime?"

Bueno, to me two of the worst crimes are rape and child molesting. I'm glad I haven't been near one 'cause I would get off on them the first chance I get. Why? Because I look at them as a rival gang member. That messed up that a man would have to force a woman for sex. To me if he is so desperate for sex there are a lot of women willing to please his ass.

And to think that some people sexually molest a child. That worse 'cause an innocent child can't even protect themselves. A woman or a man in prison can fight to cover their ass, but a child can't. Well Beat, times up, gotta go back to my apartment here in B5 max unit.

And to the homies doin' tiempo, keep trucha for chavales. Al rato.

-Sir Goofy B5

From The Beat: We agree that both the crimes you've described are very serious. You say you're glad you haven't been near anyone who's committed these crimes, but how would you know? Do you think molesting a child or raping someone is something that people talk to their friends about? You may be with people who've done these things without ever knowing about it.

Crying

The time that I came to Juvenile I was crying because I felt like I wasn't supposed to be there. The counselor was around and all they said was that it was going to be alright. The crying made me feel worse because it wasn't getting me nowhere. Nobody made me feel comfortable. I started crying on my own.

-Keese B2

From The Beat: Juvenile Hall is not a place anyone should be. It can be very stressful, and stress can lead to tears. Why do you think crying it made it worse? Didn't you feel better afterwards?

Stealing From Moms

The worst crime you can commit is stealing money from your mom. Why moms? She gone feed you, make sure you eat in B, you feel me? Steal from someone else, not moms. Moms gon risk her life and put it all on the life for you. Don't hurt yo' momma. If you hurt yo' mom you a dumb ass. Word to motha. Love your momma with all yo' heart.

-M-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: So it's okay to steal from someone else but moms but not your own? How do you justify that?

Crying When My Homies Died

Man first off I'ma say Rest In Peace to my ninjas Wag-Nutz, Rell, and my bra Nitro. Man, when I found out when bra died I thought to myself like, "Oh yeah, it's smash potatoes time!"

Man, I went to the room and I started crying of anger, and the shady thing about it is he wrote me five days before he got killed, so you know that really messed me up.

It ain't go be the same without him. This beef shhh ain't go never stop like lil' bra Ant said. I cried when I found out about my Wag and Rell. The shady thing about that was I was there when the homies got killed, but couldn't do errand. It's just revenge what's go happen. Like the big homie from the Jets said, "I still believe in heaven 'cause I'm livin' in hell.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: We don't know if you're right or not when you say it ain't never going to stop (nobody knows the future), but we hope you're wrong. But, like you, we can't see what will make it stop. The one thing we do know, however, is the pattern of revenge is not working. All that accomplishes is to create more people like you who are left behind with nothing but their tears — and the desire to get even. There must be a better way!

Worst Crime

I think the worst crime a person can commit is raping a female. I would neva rape any female because I feel that by doing that it's like raping someone's mom or sister, feel me? I know I wouldn't want that to happen to anyone or mah aunties, sister, or mah mother.

I think the punishment for this should be the same thang that happens to you when yo go to tha pen, murder. I think that a person would commit this crime either because they desperate or under tha influence. This person should neva be forgiven no matter what. I would kill anyone who does this to anyone or mah family members.

-Kidd B2

From The Beat: So, apparently you think that killing is not such a serious thing to do since you're in favor of killing rapists. But aren't you just punishing that man's family and loved ones by taking him out? Should they also have to suffer for his crime? Why do you think people rape? Do you think that bad things might have happened to them when they were children that led them to do this bad thing when they got older?

Every Man Sheds A Tear In His Lifetime!

I got a call during the ride home from the airport after my trip to Los Angeles. It was from my cousin back home in New York. He was crying... it was bad news.

My girlfriend and my newborn son died in a car accident with my 16-year-old cousin. I began to cry immediately... Speechless, I hung up the phone.

-No Name B4

From The Beat: We wish we knew who wrote about this tragic event so we could tell you how sorry we are. Yes, there are some situations where only tears are possible.

Change, But Not Everything

Cito might get out soon. So it's time to make a change in my life. Cito love his grapes though. Some things Cito don't have to change.

Cito out

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Grapes or no grapes, we like you Cito, but we never want to see you here again once you walk out these doors!

Why I Cry

I think when people cry, they either hurt physically or mentally, and by crying they relieve themselves. Sometimes I shed tears, when I get really mad and lose control and go dumb. That's why I buy I Swisher and roll a blunt to bring the nerves down, and think about what I've done.

Sometimes I cry when something exciting comes or when somebody says funny jokes, especially when I'm high or drunk. I don't do either but for fun, but to relax. That's why I cry, 'cause I'm hurting myself with drugs

-Forgot To Sign B4

From The Beat: We don't know if you forgot to sign or just didn't sign, but either way we're really sorry not to know who wrote this piece which immediately gets to the heart of why people cry. But we hear a cry for help. If you are hurting yourself with drugs — and shedding tears because of that pain — then you must find a way to stop. There are people and programs that can help. Some, like NA are well-known. There are many others run by private organizations and churches, so don't be afraid to ask someone for the help you need.

Taught Not To Cry

It is a light to cry. Sometimes people have tears of joy, sometimes people have tears of sadness. For me, I have cried before when my grandmother died. I cried in front of whoever was there I really did not care. Besides that I don't cry.

I have never had tears of joy. I'm not saying that I never will, but it just hasn't come yet. From what I have been taught I've learned to never show your feelings in front of the wrong people. Don't cry. That shows a type of weakness. Some people could use that against you.

Family, it is ok to cry in front of them — not the kind of sobbing and making noise — tears just come out you can't do anything to stop it. Just cry and get it out of your system

-Hustla B4

From The Beat: It's interesting, the things we're taught. Sometimes, we think it's the strongest men who can cry openly when tears are the natural and appropriate response to so many things that happen to us in life. Do you ever question this lesson you were taught?

Trying Hard

I was thinking about how we as black people are all messed up. We call each other darker than the other, but we are dark. We ask people to do things for us, but we never pay them back.

I don't know. Maybe it's just me. I try to be different, but everybody keeps telling me I'm acting funny. I'm trying hard to stay on the right path, but I keep going pushed off.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: We don't know why some light-skinned black people make fun of others with darker skin. If "Black Is Beautiful" — and it is — then blacker must be more beautiful! But, of course, not everybody is guilty of acting this way. For example, you try to be different. Then don't worry about what people say. In fact, that's what should make you different — listening to your own voice and not the voices of others.

The Day I Cried

The day I cried was when my homie Sharkie passed away. He was my best friend. He was like a brother to me. He got killed. He was shot seven times and for that I hate the people that did that to him.

I'm never going to forget him. We were some down gangster. But now that he gone I suffer and know life won't be the same without him. I try to forget what happened, but it hurts to know that I'm never going to hear his voice no more. He only exist now only in my memory. RIP Joker aka Sharkie. We all love you. Stay trucha in the sky homie. Much love.

Your homie aka Assassin.

-Your homie B4

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about the death of your friend. We really hope that you're recovering even though you are in there dealing with so much. Just be sure to always keep him in mind no matter what. That way he will always be with you. Don't let your hate for Sharkie's assassins lead to new tragedies.

We All Cry

I felt it was okay to cry when I got stabbed! And when my grandparents died.

A lot of people think when you cry it make you a sucka, whatever you wanna call it. But in reality everybody in this world cries!

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: Yes, it's all right to cry. It's not all right to get stabbed! Don't put yourself in situations that could result in your loved ones shedding tears for you.

The Worst Crime

The worst crime I think people can commit is child molestation because when you do that you mess somebody life up forever and they will be scared of people. I don't understand why people would do that because I know they wouldn't want that to happen to them.

-Lil D-Tag B4

From The Beat: Does it surprise you to learn that most adults who molest children were victims of molestation when they were children? So maybe you've answered your own question. They got messed up as children, and now they act the same way that messed them up! That's the messed-up cycle of child abuse.

Wanting To Change, But...

I never feel like it's ok to cry, but every time someone close to me dies I cry. I cry not just because I'm going to miss them, but because it could have been my, so I try to make a positive change, but I just can't.

-Charles B4

From The Beat: All of us carry a fear for our own mortality, Charles, so we understand what you are describing. Wanting to make a positive change is the necessary first step to making it, so "can't" is a word you can't use. Others have made the change you want to make (including a number working as Beat facilitators who could tell you how they did it), so we know it can be done.

Does It Matter?

Man, do any of it matter? If you do a crime and get away, cool. If you get caught, oh well. If you believe in heaven good, 'cause then you know it's a hell. Everything is up to you. Everyone has their own choice. It's up to you to make the right one.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: Are you going to make the right choice now, Lil' Carl? So far in life, you have been making bad choices for yourself, so what are you doing to do now that's different?

The Worst Crime: Rape

The worst crime in my eyes, that would be rape. Why? Because if someone, anyone were to touch my female cousins or my little boy cousins I'd make sure they pick them out dirt. Even if it was my own family or one of my boys that did the crime, I'd say they deserve to go to jail, not die, even though I would say it for someone I don't know.

-Scotty B5

From The Beat: We're curious to know why your reaction to someone raping (or molesting) your little cousins would be so much stronger than if someone were to kill one of them. Why is rape worse than murder?

Hell On Earth

I think besides killing, raping is a big crime for me because you trying to keep this person on this earth for humiliation and to put that persons life in hell while on earth.

-Ej B4

From The Beat: There is no question that rape can have devastating consequences for many victims. But some people can move on with their lives more easily than others. But we agree, rape can change a person's life forever.

When You Die

I think when you die you just in a eternal sleep you never wake up from. I think the way you live life determines how you die. And also you was born in something then you'll die in something.

-Grimmy B4

From The Beat: We took out the jokes, partly because we found them online (you didn't write all of them...), and partly because we think the subject of what happens to you when you die is not that funny... If death is eternal sleep, do you dream?

When My Uncle Got Killed

Man, the worst crime that I saw was when my uncle got killed in front of my face. I was hella scared 'cause I thought they was gone kill me 'cause I was a witness.

-Jeff's Wifey GU

From The Beat: That sounds terrifying. What did you do? What has happened since then? If you haven't already, we hope you find somebody to talk to about it, because those feelings can come at any time. We're so sorry about your uncle.

What Happens When You Die?

When you die your family makes a funeral for you and make a sweater or shirt with your face on it and reminisce the good times. When you die your eyes are forever closed (unless someone opens 'em. Eww!) And you get buried six feet under dirt. I guess you go to Heaven. I hope to go there one day.

-Marina GU

From The Beat: You kept your description grounded in reality, and realize you can only guess what happens to you when you die. If you go to heaven, what do you imagine it's like?

Need To Leave

Well, how is everyone doin'? Hope good. Well as for me not so good 'cause I been here too long, 63 days, and they won't let me out... Hope they can just send me to my group home soon 'cause being here ain't doing shhh for me for real for real.

Man, I'm missing my mom so much, but oh well, it's my problem... But I'll be out soon won't I? We will all be out soon.

But you know what I hate the most is that when I see the homies in here doin' time... This screwed up system us just playin' us all so damn bad 'cause they hatin' so bad huh. Well I'm out for now. Goodbye.

-Lil' Shadow GU

From The Beat: The system can only play you if you give them the power to do so. You made choices. Even knowing that the possible consequences was exactly what you're experiencing right now, you made the choices anyway. That's when the system gained power over your life — started playing you — and that's when you started thinking about the consequences. Although you may feel like it at times — and especially at times like now — you are NOT powerless.

My First Love Died

I felt it was okay to cry when my first love died. The police had shot him. They here to save you but they wanna flip the script and kill our young ones. On the real, without their guns and badges, the police ain't nuttin' but some punks!

Back to the point, I felt it was okay to cry when I found out that my baby got killed. And I still cry. I'll never be able to get over my baby, but I'll have to move on one day. It'll be hard but it'll happen. But I'ma always love him!

Rest in peace baby! I'll see you when I get there!!

-April GU

From The Beat: Oh, yes, you'll always love your baby in a very special way, and that is good. It is tragic that your first love — and so many young men — die violently, either at the hands of other young men or, like here, at the hands of the police. What do you think needs to happen to stop this?

Up To The Judge

I got court tomorrow so basically the judge goin' to do what he do. Man I'm not trippin' 'cause I did the crime so I have to do the time. I'ma just do what I have to do and get out of here. Chea.

-Jeff's Wifey GU

From The Beat: It sounds like you are taking responsibility for your actions, and that's good. If you were running the system, could you come up with other things besides "doing time" as appropriate consequences for whatever got you here? Whatever the judge does, we hope you use your time (wherever you are) to focus on what changes you can make so that you won't have to come here again!

Go To Church, Go To Heaven

I think if you a person who goes to church all the time it's because they believe that everyone should go to church. But when you died I think people who go to church will go to Heaven. People who really don't go to church will go to Hell.

-Lysis GU

From The Beat: Can a person be a good person, but not go to church? Can a person be a bad person, but also go to church?

Drama

Damn. Now my life ain't filled with nothing but drama. Just had the worst fight ever with my mama. She believe that you got a three coming up, telling her I am loving her but I going home to him. Damn. I hope she wrong 'cause I love the ground you walk on. She knows that your ties in the street can be fatal. She's threaten to diss on me if I don't let this go. Lord, can you help me? I am so afraid.

-Swiss Mama GU

From The Beat: The story of young love that parents don't approve is an old one. That's what "Romeo and Juliet" is all about. In that play, both die. Your mother's saying the things she's saying because she loves you and believes she's acting in your best interest. You cannot know ahead of time whether she is right or wrong, so you are facing a very difficult choice. We know how powerful the feelings of love can be at your age, but we also know that the only true love you can count on right now is the love of your family. Think very hard about this. She has been your mother a long, long time and she will be your mother forever.

The Worst Crime

The worst you can commit is to kill the president. The reason I think this is the worst crime is because it's not like killing someone on the street, but it's like you are killing someone who makes decisions about your life.

-Lysis GU

From The Beat: So, you think it's worse to kill the President than to kill someone in your family? Why is the President's life worth more than yours?

A Plan To Stay Free

W'at's up, The Beat? Dis Princess still up in here, waiting for my PO to quit playing and let me go home. I got court on Friday and my confinement time is up on June 29th, so they might just let me go home. Wish me luck! I can't wait to go home. I been here for hella years! I think my mommie don't know I'm still here. When I get home I'm goin' to go to school, get a job, and stay out of trouble.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: Sounds like a good plan princess. And we do mean plan. Of course we wish you luck, but luck is not enough without a plan. How much school do you still need to do? What kind of job are you looking for? These are parts of a great plan. We hope you stick to it.

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm going to see my lil' nephew and I'ma see my boo, JT. But anyways I don't know what else to say but chea.

-Jeff's Wifey GU

From the Beat: Tell us about your nephew, about your boo. Give us a window into your life through your writing. We like it much more if you don't write about all three topics, because then we really don't get an idea of what you can say or how you can think. Next time, just choose one of the topics and write as many details about as you can.

How To Make Boys Cry

Kick them where it hurts! Ha Ha.

Suckas.

Why?

Because.

Because guys try to act hard instead of showin' emotion. Fellas, sho' yo' ladies emotions an treat 'em firme and best believe they'll be down for you.

-Marina GU

From The Beat: You got our attention right off (even if we had to alter it slightly...). Really, your piece is about giving advice to the boys. Why do you think boys are taught not to show their emotions? Do you really believe they're "suckas" for believing what they're taught?

When Do You Feel It's Ok To Cry

When yo ninjas die I feel it's ok to cry

When you go to jail, it's ok to shed a tear

When yo' family is hurting, you cry

If you're not goin' home, cry just a lil' bit

That's when it's ok to cry

-Rhonda GU

From The Beat: We agree that these are all appropriate times to cry. When is it not okay to cry? Why is it okay in some instances and not others? Does crying make you feel better or worse?

Let It Out

I feel that every time you feel like crying you should express your feeling and cry because cryin', it releases stress. When you don't cry you're just holding stress in.

-Lysis GU

From The Beat: Do you think boys are under more stress than girls because they try to hide their tears? Next time, please don't write about all three of our topics because that only lets you put down one or two sentences about it. Just choose one topic, the one that you feel the most, and write a lot more about it to express what you think. You have strong ideas, so we want to get to know you through your writing.

Weed Makes My Heart Beat Faster

My heart beats fast when I smoke weed or dope. Crack heads are around me when I smoke dope and cool-ass people are around me when I smoke. Oh my BD (Baby's Daddy) is around me when I smoke.

I was at a balla's house when all of a sudden my heart started beating hella fast and I couldn't stop it. I got so scared I thought I was going to die. Everyone (dope fiends) around me told me don't worry, and that I was smoking too fast. It eventually slowed down and then I went home.

-Ronda GU

From The Beat: Is your baby around you when you smoke? Even at your age, your body and brain is still developing (which should make you wonder what that drug may be doing to your development), so what do you think marijuana smoke (second hand) would do to a baby's development? After your heart returned to a normal rate, did you just shine it on? Ignore what your body was telling you? Have you changed anything since then? If not, when do you think it'll happen again? If yes, what?

Men Should Cry Only When They're Alone

I think men should not cry, but hold their emotion to theirself, or when you are alone.

-Dwanye LCRS

From The Beat: Why do you think men shouldn't cry when they feel like it, or cry only when they're alone, Dwanye? Do you ever cry? When is the last time you cried? What caused it? Is it okay for women to cry? When you see someone cry, how do you feel? Closer to them? Sorry for them? Ashamed of them? Separate from them? There's no "right way" to react, only the way you feel.

Off The Top Of My Head

Bored ass hell
Trapped in a cell
Freestylin' off the top of my head
Thinkin' of somethin' that's gonna be said
It's like goin' to the block
And get raided by the feds
Thinkin' hard ass 'bout the hero
That once led
Led us to what we got now
And what we have later
It all depends on them freakin' haters
Talking to 'em girls
Knowin' they just wanna cater
It's like, "Do me now
And see y'all later"
This ain't true
I'm just saying whatever
Playin' the game
And thinkin' they clever
Once they caught
You know it's a rap
What you expect?
We come from the bottom of the map

-Ngo LCRS

From The Beat: No matter where you come from, depending how you hold the map, some part of the earth is going to be pointing up, another part down. If you think a girl is just out for thrills, your body, your money, whatever, out for whatever they think you've got, can you just hide whatever, ignore these girls or just have fun with them, and move on. AS for going back to a neighborhood where trouble reigns, we hope you can stay as far away from trouble as possible.

This Life, This Game

When I was very young
Thought that this life was a game
I decided to call myself Slow Pain
Now I am locked up at the Ranch
Thinking about my lil' homie
In the hall

Que honda?
I am in here at the Ranch,
doing my time.
I am locked up.

They told me they was going to send me to
the YA
an' they lied.
Al rato.

-Slow Pain LCRS

From The Beat: You really don't want to go to YA, Slow Pain, so are you glad whoever lied? Are you doing all right down at the Ranch? Do you still think life is a game? If so, what game are you playing? If not, what changed your mind? What made you take life seriously?

It's Always OK

I feel like it is always ok to cry. That's a way of expressing your feelings and emotions. Sometimes crying even makes you feel better.

-Lady Nolan GU

From The Beat: Yes, we have experienced feeling better after tears too! Why do you think boys answer this question differently?

Child Molestation

The worst crime anyone can commit is child molestation. That is the most gruesome, sick, disgusting thing anyone could ever do. Not even murder can compete with that in my opinion. That should be put on the death penalty list. It causes so much grief for the person that can last a lifetime.

-Arshaye GU

From The Beat: You express your opinion powerfully and persuasively. But don't you think that murder also causes permanent grief in those left behind? And if a child molester is "sick," should we put him to death? What if he was molested when he was a child? Still death? These are all difficult questions, and we'd love to read your view of them

The End

I think when I die there's just going to bury me under the ground.

-Lina GU

From The Beat: Do you have a soul or spirit?

Every Crime Is The Worst

I think every crime is the worst crime you could commit.
Just like every sin is the worst sin you could do.
A crime is a sin so I don't think there is a worst crime.

-Rhonda GU

From The Beat: This is quite philosophical, Rhonda. Is the crime of rape no worse than the crime of shoplifting? Both are sins, so does that make them equal? How do you define a "crime"? How do you define sin?

Waiting For Placement

What's up, The Beat? Dis is Princess still up in here. I was supposed to leave like last week, but my probation officer playin'. She said that the paperwork took too long to get to the group home, so somebody took my bed. So now I got to wait another two-three months or so. But my PO said I might go to my sister's house on house arrest till I get accepted. I got court on June 21st and 23rd. Hopefully I'll be out.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: What happened?

Heaven Or Hell

When you die I think you either go to heaven or hell. The reason why I think this is because that's how I was brought up. If I'm wrong I guess I will have to see when I die.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: Where do you see yourself going, Heaven or Hell? What are you doing in life now that might send you in one direction or the other?

The Man Upstairs Will Decide What Happens

When you die you go to heaven or hell, and everything you did is your wrong. And the Man upstairs will decide what happens.

-Dwanye LCRS

From The Beat: Do you also mean that everything you did is your wrong and right? Because some things you did must have been right—kind, unselfish, more than what was required, right? If you passed away tonight, where do you think the man upstairs would send you? What do you think heaven or hell are like? If you were God, where would you send you?

Rape Deprives You Of Your Dignity

I think the worst crime is rape, because, first of all, it's unwanted attention, then you're depriving a person of their dignity.

-Dwanye LCRS

From The Beat: That's so true. A rapist is sick and has so no regard for you, your body, your soul, that this person would desecrate it for one's own sense of power, pleasure. But don't you think that it's the rapist who risks losing it's soul, not the victim? But the victim can and often does, feel like he or she's betrayed him/herself because he/she was unable to defend her/his body. Isn't that sad?

OK To Cry

The only time I think that is ok to cry is when someone that you knew or loved passed away. The other time that is ok to cry is when someone you know get hurt or abused or even raped.

-Lina GU

From The Beat: Did you ever cry when you didn't think it was okay? Does it always have to be so serious and heavy as rape, or the death of someone you love? Is it okay to cry when you watch a sad movie? (Next time, Lina, can you choose just one Beat topic, not all three, to write about? We like your writing, but we can't get to know you when you put down only one sentence... Next time, write a lot more about just one topic. Thanks.)

Why I Hate Females

I hate females 'cause they lie
I hate females 'cause they think they shhh
I hate females 'cause they think they fly
I hate females 'cause they think they got the latest fits
I hate females 'cause they messy
I hate females 'cause they always hatin'
I hate females 'cause they away trying to mess with my baby daddy
I hate females 'cause all they do is talk

-Jeannie-M GU

From The Beat: All females? Do you hate yourself? Your mother? We know many females who are exactly as you describe them (and sadly, we know a lot of males like that too), but not all the females we know are like that. How did you manage to not be like them?

The Picture

Gangsta gangsta I play that part.
But you betta be cool before the play hearts.
Tha cards ya delt really ain't good
Fa health 'cause you betta try'ta stand fa self.
I see some cats be act'n'
But see some cats be pack'n'
Jah, and best believe D-Grinda be ready fa action
So that's tha picture — be quiet if you ain't got no pistol
Before these real thugs really dismiss ya
You get tha picture

-Lil D B4

From The Beat: The picture you've word-painted is dark but clear. The problem is, we think you've only painted a part of the picture. D-Grinda may be "ready fa action," and he may not be easily dismissed by "real thugs" — but look where it's led! And if it had led to something worse — like his death, for example — then there would be no way to teach what you have to teach because the teacher would be gone. Because we admire the palette you paint from, we hope you will expand your vision to take in the whole picture, and then paint it for us in your powerful words.

What I Think About My Life

This is what I think about ma life.

At the age of 16, disappear from my town. Friends not knowing that I'm locked up and trying to get ma life together, being threatened for a personal reason. Since august 9, 2005, friend and some family members are thinking that I am dead.

But I am back from el pantion.

-One And Only Me

From The Beat: Well, we're glad that you are back. Maybe you'll feel like sharing more of this mysterious story with us after a while.

Just A Guy

I got hurt by you. You left. There was nothing you could do to change. All you ever do is run. I liked you. My pain to you was nothing. I know you thought you cared about me. But the pain was huge.

I tried to cry but no tears would come out. So I guess I really did not like you. Because I couldn't even cry. So I wish you weren't just another guy but you are. So don't think you were that much. You was just a guy.

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: This is kind of sad, B-Eyes, not just because this young man who you thought was special turns out to be "just (another) guy, but because it seems to have colored your feelings about all guys. Just keep open the possibility that there are males out there who are thoughtful, who don't disrespect females, and who are worthy of love. Don't give up on the opposite sex!

My Life's A Mess

Yo, I don't know what the hell is goin' on. But forget al that, yo! These losers all around me... Creating suspects only causes more stress for me... The possibilities are endless... Some dudes wanna waste me... So much shhh..

I'm ready to get away from this place. I ain't safe... I need to vanish without a trace... A hustler of the street could pay anyone the right price to get what they want... When something goes down... I don't make a big deal... I keep in on the low... When I go, everyone will know... But if I don't get on, I think someone gonna send me.

Damn! All alone in this big mess.

-Biggie Littles

From The Beat: It's hard to know how to respond to this, BL, because even though we feel your sense of panic and doom, we have no idea what is at the hart of this drama. All we can say is that if you feel this frightened about your environment, then do anything you have to change it.



Be A Leader Not A Follower

Be the point of the needle that leads the thread.
To all my peeps don't stand out in the streets .
Don't try to be cool like the stupid creeps.

-LiL Payasa

From The Beat: Great advice. We wish more young people we know would take it.

You're The One

You walked into my life
When I was down and out
Took away my pain, gave me your smile
And at the time still loving someone else
Not knowing why the reason why I felt the way I felt
But then one day, I realized that you were the one for me

I was so blind but baby, now I see
And I'll never let you go, no, no, no
I'll love you so and I'll get on my knees and beg you please,

Would you spend the rest of your life with me?
'Cause I'll never, Babe, wanna let you go
No, no, no

I wish that I could turn back the hands of time
'Cause if I would have known your love was like this back then

I would have made you mine

Oh, yeah

If I could die a thousand times a day
I'll d it for you just to take the pain I've given you away

Baby, please understand when I say I'm sorry, I am sorry, Baby
And I'll never let you go
No, no, no

'Cause I love you
and I'll get on both my knees and beg you please
would you spend the rest of your life with me?

-Smokey

From The Beat: So, if this person is the one for you, what went wrong when you two were together? Do you think it's because you can't be together now that you're fiending for him so much? When you get back out there, will your relationship be the thing you work on, or will you keep working on yourself to make sure you never have to be locked up again?

Problems With Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

I feel going dumb, stupid, hyphy is not a way of life. I feel people go dumb, stupid hyphy to have fun and to get loose. What I have to say to people who think going dumb, stupid, hyphy is not ridiculous, take another look at a lot of the problems in the Bay. A lot of our problems are caused because of going dumb, stupid, hyphy.

-Stewie's Gyr1

From The Beat: There's a difference of opinion here. Some people paint a very innocent picture of a kind of freestyle of dancing (and other activities?). But you point out that a lot of times there are negative consequences to that kind of freestyle expression.

He Lied

So a time I have been lied to... Someone I used to love so much lied to me. he got this other girl pregnant and told me she wasn't pregnant, then told me he didn't love her. But now that I'm in here, I've heard he's with her still.

How that has affected my life is I feel like leaving my program and going to kill him or her or someone...

-Merrily

From The Beat: Of course you know that if you act out on any part of those feelings, from leaving the program to hurting someone, the person you'll be killing is you. Don't punish yourself with significant consequences just because you're angry at a male. We'll bet he's not worth it. We know you are.

Focus On You

Stop thinking 'bout him
Stay on you
Remember he's gone now
Don't forget your true
So get back on this money hype
Playin' all these fools
Tellin' a whole bunch of lies
That they taught me true
So now I'm coo' getting what I want living off you
Feelin' fly livin' life
'Bout to keep on telling all these lies
I'm a keep this fake smile on
While I'm playing you boo
So jus keep it movin'
Gone somewhere
Wit' all that goin' dumb an' stupid hyphy shhh
Hop in yo' wipe while I keep on knockin' this pac shhh

-C-EI-Smooth

From The Beat: Telling your friend to get over it is probably good advice. But then to continue to advise that she live the life of a gold digger, that is not such good advice. It catches up to you after a while.

I tried to cry but no tears would come out. So I guess I really did not like you. Because I couldn't even cry.

Pride Week

Happy Pride Week, Beat! It's Pride Week, and Sunday is the parade. I want to go and see the beautiful things but I'm in here so I can't.

-Kalifornia

From The Beat: We appreciate this because there aren't many young people who are willing to give respect to the gay community. We know there are many young people in the halls who would like to say the same thing you have, but who don't want to be labeled as "gay," so they either remain silent or adopt an anti-gay stance. Thanks for being open!

Keep Talking

Mistake, I know I made a few
But I'm only human, you made mistakes too
But you wanna keep talking shhh telling stories
Let's get it on
Like a possum, you try and cover your tracks
'Cause you'll be a rat like your daddy
Now and then I lose my way,
Feel like I never knew my way

-LiL Smiley

From The Beat: We don't think your respecting The Beat when you use it to call someone out (and to talk about their daddy). But then, when you say you sometimes feel like you don't know your way, we understand your confusion. Forget what others say about you. Focus on what you say and do about yourself.

Crime

C-an
R-ealistic
I-ssues
M-eet
E-xpectations
?

-Kalifornia
From The Beat: We need some explanation of this. Can you provide it?

Hyphy-F

H-ow
Y-ou
P-retend
H-ow
Y-ou
-
F-eel
Or
H-inding
Y-oung
P-eople's
(t)H-inking
capacit-Y

-Kalisa
From The Beat: This is clever. Is going hyphy something you miss?

The Love Of My Life

Q-vole, Beat? Well, today I am going to talk about the love of mi vida. I want him to know that I really love him so that he runs through my mind for centuries. I miss him so dang much and that we'll soon be in each other's arms again. It may seem like years, but baby, please realize that I am doing this for you 'cause I really do love you. Baby Boy, every time I see your face, my heart beats a thousand miles away 'cause one look in your eyes, I know that we'll always be together.

Please say these three lil' words, Baby, I love you. You are very special to me. I send this message out to you to let you know that we may be a thousand miles away, but they can never separate us because we'll be in each other's hearts. I love you boy, till the very end. Remember, this is your girl. I love you, Wolfy.

-Smokey L
From The Beat: Okay, we get the picture. You love Wolfy. But in all these words, you haven't given us a sense of what it is that you love. Is he kind? Is he good to you? What makes him more special than anyone else? More important, what are you both doing to prepare yourselves not just to be in each other's arms, but to stay there.

Don't Cry!

I feel it's not ok to cry in court or a fight, and that's how I feel yadada. I only feel like it's a lot of people only cry about people and loved ones.

-Lil' Zillah
From The Beat: There's not much here, Lil' Zillah. We could use a lot more explanation of your thinking!

Crying

Sometimes I feel like crying but I can't. I'll even try to make myself feel pain, about things in my life that have really hurt me and I can't. So when I'm just sitting thinking about nothing, I'll start crying, not wanting to cry but I can't help it. so I just cry and cry until no more tears come out. Afterwards I'll sit and think about how much better I feel.

-Coko
From The Beat: We find this very interesting, Coko. There is a mental condition called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which often comes when people experience terrible things in their lives. One of the symptoms of that condition is sudden tears for no apparent reason. Maybe you are suffering from PTSD and you don't even know it. Anyway, thanks for this piece.

MARIN

What Happens When We Die?

The ordained potentiality of an orthodox oscillation swept through my belief system, affecting the stability of my odium from a distance. Or, to put it another way, a remarkable cirro-stratus created by a harmonious ensiform being created an ursine threat whose fated cogwheels are quite clearly arrayed against me. So, the best thing for it is to continue my philosophic omphalakepsis dispassionately until I have examined the peculiarities of each detail.

-Aristotle Jr.
From The Beat: Aristotle, are you saying that you're feeling pessimistic, that everything is working against you, so you will keep pondering life through each detail until you understand what you can do to improve your lot without getting emotional about it, through philosophic contemplation and remaining stoic? If so, we hope that works for you. Let us know how it comes out! Good luck, presupposing you may incorporate luck into your cosmology.

Baby Girl

Baby girl
Let me tell you something
I got a crush on you, girl
And I ain't even frontin'.
Tell yo' girls to get the party started
It's goin' down, girl
When I'm in town, girl
Baby girl, let me kiss yo' freckles
Call me Mr. Jeckel
Got you twisted like a pretzel
'Cause you the one I want to get next to
Let me touch yo' body
Tell me how it gets you

-Smiley
From The Beat: Sounds like you're ready to get out of juvy and party. Is this lady waiting for you on the outs? What was so compelling that you risked being away from her to do it? AS for all the things you want to do with this young lady, we hope you keep a hands off attitude until the feelings are mutual!

Someone's Dignity

I think that the worst crime is rape and murder. I think that it is messed up that somebody would rape some one else to take someone's dignity.

-Jonathan
From The Beat: People who have been raped sometimes say that one of the most horrendous aspects of it was the helpless feeling they were forced to feel—that there was nothing they could do to prevent it, nothing they could do to protect their body, as if somehow they had colluded in betraying their own body. Some find it hard to forgive themselves for failing to be able to defend themselves, as well as feeling fury and hatred against the rapist.

After Death

I believe when you die, you go to sleep until God comes to judge everyone. Then God decides whether you go to heaven or hell.

-Perry
From The Beat: Interesting idea. Do you think you're conscious, somehow, when you're in that in-between state? Like in a dream? Then what happens after God determines whether you'll go to heaven or hell? What are both places like, do you think? Where do you think God would send you when you time comes

Jadian

Jack
Amber
Dad
Inside
About
Name
My name is Jadian.

-Jadian
From The Beat: Why don't you write The Beat more about your family, Jadian? What are they doing while you're away in juvy? How does you're being inside affect them? What will you do differently, when you're back home, to feel closer to them?

Life Being Alone

When I lay at night, I fall asleep
And then I know someday
I could possibly be six feet deep
When I was out, I never had time
My girlfriend is so fine
When you're grown
They got where you can get bail
But I find myself
Always sittin' in a cell
I wish a girl would sing me a song
But then, you know
I'm always feeling alone

-Lil' Marcus
From The Beat: Isn't it amazing, when you're locked in your room with no interruptions, to what subjects your mind wanders? Sometime everyone's mind fills with nonsense, other times it may zoom right to what concerns it most. When you think about your own death, what do you come up with? Do you feel alone on the outs too? Do you have good friends, maybe a girlfriend, on the outs? Family members you hang with? Now that you've had time to think about it, when you're free again, what can you do to get closer to people you love?

God decides
whether you go to
heaven or hell.

Las Mentiras Y Sonrisas Falsas

Yo pienso que algunas de las mentiras que me han afectado en mi vida han sido en el gobierno de mi país. Ellos nomás roban y por eso muchas personas se vienen a vivir a los Estados Unidos, como por ejemplo mi familia. Aquí fue como empecé a conocer las malas amistades, drogas, pandillas, y muchas otras cosas que han afectado mi vida.

Muchas veces hay personas que te sonríen y te das cuenta en su propia cara cuando es verdadera o falsa. Como por ejemplo, a mí me ha pasado con mis propios amigos. Ellos te sonríen y luego te enteras o te das cuenta que esa sonrisa es falsa.

From The Beat: Desgraciadamente la corrupción existe en todos los países del mundo. Como tú dices, tus padres vinieron acá por la razón de superar, no para verte en este lugar. Has guiado tu vida al camino que nadie esperabas que llevaras. ¿Has pensado en esto? Deberías de alejarte de estas gente que solo han traído problemas a tu vida. En este país se viene a superar no a terminar en estos lugares. Esperamos que agarres la onda.

The Lies And The False Smiles

I believe that some of the lies that have affected me in my life has been the lies from the government of my country. They just steal and that's why so many people come to live in the United States, like for example my family. This is where I began to know bad company, drugs, gangs, and many other things that have affected my life.

Many times there are people who smile at you and you realize on their own face when it is real or fake. Like for example, this has happened to me with my own friends. They smile at you and later on you find out or you realize that that smile was fake.

-Enrique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Unfortunately, corruption exists in all the countries of the world. Like you said, your parents came to this country for the sole reason to excel and not to see you in this place. You have steered your life to the road no one hoped you would take. Have you thought about this? You should distance yourself from those people who have only brought problems to your life. One comes to this country to excel, not to end up in these kinds of places. We hope you catch the drift.

Cuando Me Pongo Nervioso

Yo me pongo nervioso cuando llebo tiempo de no haber visto a mis amigos y a mi familia. Siento que el corazón late rápidamente.

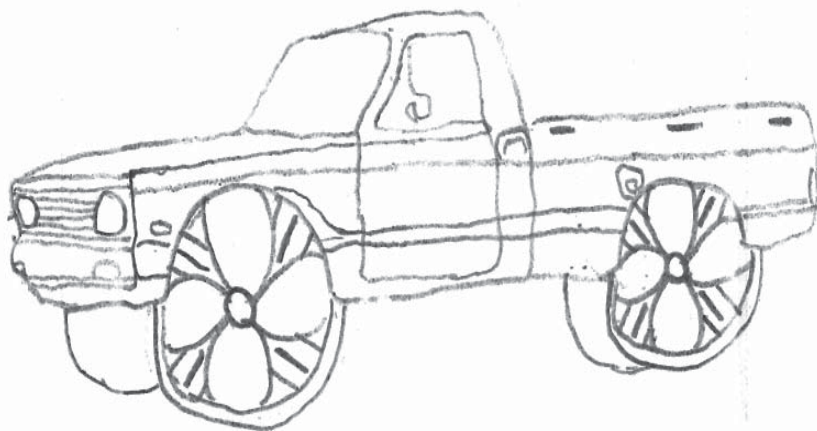
From The Beat: Es bien normal lo que te pasa. A todos nos pasa. ¿Te dará nervio cuando vayas a volver a hacer las cosas que te trajeron aquí?

When I Get Nervous

I get nervous when I go a long time without seeing my friends or my family. I feel like my heart beats rapidly.

-Carlos, Marin

From The Beat: It's very normal what happens to you. It happens to all of us. Will you get nervous if you ever decide to do the things that brought you to this place?



Cuando Me Da Nervios

Mi corazón late muy rápido cuando miro a los policías o a un enemigo que viene detrás de mí. También cuando me lleban a corte, cuando miro al juez y cuando espero lo que me va a decir.

From The Beat: Se supone que tiene que latir de esa manera si andas en pasos que no deberías de andar. ¿Crees que después de esta experiencia aprendas algo?

When I Get Nervous

My heart beats very fast whenever I see the police or when an enemy comes behind me. Also, when they take me to court, when I see the judge, and when I wait to hear what the judge has to say.

-Chino, Marin

From The Beat: We suppose that's how your heart should beat when you are doing things that you are not supposed to. Do you believe that after this experience you have learned something?

¿Qué Te Molesta?

Lo que a mí me molesta es mi vida, como la estoy viviendo, como de andar de desmadroso, y que me vala madre todo hasta mi vida. Me molesta estar aquí porque me siento como un estúpido. Me molesta estar aquí porque no puedo hacer nada y siento que no valgo nada.

From The Beat: ¿Si te molesta esta vida, has buscado manera como cambiarla? Si tú mismo te metistes en esta situación crees que puedas salirte de ella? ¿Que estas esperando para darte cuenta que no has estado actuando como debes?

What Bothers Me?

What bothers me is my life, how I am living it, like how I go around being a troublemaker, and how I don't give a damn about anything, even my own life. It bothers me being in here because I feel like an idiot. It bothers me to be in here because I can't do anything and I feel like I am worthless.

-S, Marin

From The Beat: If this life bothers you, have you looked for a way to change it? If you yourself placed yourself in this situation, do you believe that you can get out of it? What are you waiting for in order to realize that you are not acting like you are supposed to?

Por Mis Malas Influencias

Yo soy un vendedor de drogas por mis primos y mis hermanos. También soy un roba carros. Ellos me invitaron a robar esteros de carros, y a vender drogas. Por eso soy así, pero no me gustaría que mi hermanito fuera como yo porque no quiero que vaya a parar en una cárcel.

Lo que me molesta es que no puedo salir de aquí. Quiero salir rápido de la cárcel para ir a fumar mota y a beber me unas cuantas cervezas con mis amigos, mi novia, y mi primo que están esperando para hacer un party cuando salga de la juvenil.

From The Beat: Definitivamente tienes que hacer algo al respecto porque si sigues pensando en parties vas a volver a este lugar bien rápido. Tienes que alejarte de esas amistades que te han llevado hasta este punto. Las cosas que te han enseñado y las cosas que has aprendido son muy malas y sino haces un cambio te lo vas a alimentar después. ¿No crees que es mejor cambiar ahorita y así evitar muchos confrontaciones con la soledad y desesperación?

Because Of My Bad Influences

I am a drug dealer because of my cousins and my brothers. I am a car thief. They invited me to rob car stereos and to sell drugs. That is why I am the way that I am, but I would not like it if my little brother were like me because I don't want him to end up in a jail cell.

What bothers me is that I cannot leave from this place. I want to get out of jail fast so I can go smoke weed and drink some beers with my friends, my girlfriend, and my cousin, all of which are waiting for me to get out of Juvenile so they can throw me a party.

-Oscar B2

From The Beat: You definitely have to do something in regards to your drug habits because if you continue thinking about parties all the time, you're going to come back to this place real quick. You have to distance yourself from those companions who have led you to this point. The things that they have taught you and the things you have learned are very bad things, and if you don't make a change in your life, you're going to regret it later on in life. Don't you believe that it is best to make a change right now and therefore avoid many confrontations with solitude and desperation?

"Turning Back The Hands Of Time"

A couple of weeks ago we announced that we stopped accepting submissions for the 15th Editorial Note Writing Contest: Turning Back The Hands Of Time. And since then we've published nine contest pieces within the last two issues. The following five pieces are our latest submissions. We'll continue to keep publishing them until it's time for our staff to vote on the winners. Remember the first-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each.

And if you forgot the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

The competition is getting heavy as we've already read some incredible writing. Some new authors, some old, but all with something to teach. We had a heavy crew of writers featured in our contest section last week, so it'll be a tough act to follow, but we're confident that these next five writers will step up to the plate and at the very least give us something to think about. Take your minds and turn back the hands of time in preparation for the wonderful ideas and expressions you're about to witness.

EMILY E.

Formerly In Hillcrest
Currently Out On Probation

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

If I could turn back the hands of time, I'm not exactly sure how far back I would go. Could I only go back once? To one specific time? Or could I do something more like the movie "Butterfly Effect"? Keep going back until I was content with the outcome?

If that's the case, I could go back to November 2005, back to when I smoked Meth for the first time in two years. I have yet to explain the thoughts going through my head that would have provoked me into smoking when I only had three weeks left of probation. It could have been all over right then and there. I could go back to last February when I was supposed to quit smoking weed, but thought I could get away with a couple more dirty tests back when my probation officer didn't check up on me at all because he couldn't locate where I was half the time. Due to the fact that I was always out of my house more than half the time I was unavailable to even see my family during the summer when all I felt was myself, wasting away.

I'd go back to April 28, 2004, when I stole from Nordstrom's and ran. The best part was that I could have paid for it, all of it, and I chose to run and face the consequences.

I'd go back to when I was 15, some time in April 2003. That's when I had gotten drunk and raped by my best friend's dad. I still can't face or talk to him. But for some reason I haven't given a name to anyone but a couple friends who I can trust and understand the weight of my decision.

Back in January of that year when I was introduced to Crank, the dirtiest form of speed.

Late in 2002 when I first tried mushrooms. I honestly had no idea what I was doing or how it would affect me.

Back in 2002 when I became so consumed in my own life struggles, I stole money from my dad to help support my habits.

Back to September on the 28th, about a month into school, I got caught smoking weed, possessing the top of a pipe, had a cigarette, and had a bottle of clear eyes. That same year I got caught in the summer smoking a cigarette on campus.

I'd go back to sometime in the summer of 2001 when I

became interested in drugs, and random guys, all because I stopped caring. Somewhere in between all of this I was told I had snorted coke, but instead later found out I had done PCP.

I'd go back to the summer of 2001. Back to the time a friend molested me. But I didn't realize what was going on because I had been subdued.

I'd go back to my eighth grade year. My parents split in April. Before that my mom had filed a police report saying he beat her. All just because she was drunk and after me for telling my father about her secret love life she had been leading. Only he was holding her away from me. Trying to protect me because he loved me.

I lost my virginity to my first boyfriend on January 12, 2001. I was only into my first year as a teen. Maybe I'd go back to when I was in elementary school. Back to when the kids harassed me. When I'd cry at night because of the hurtful things I had heard that day.

I could have gone back to when I moved to Belmont. Maybe I could have prevented that. Prevented my existence even. Some how. Some way. I could have changed my life entirely. I could have done something.

But the thing of it is... There really isn't anything I'd change. Sure, there are some things I'd go back and do differently. But if I had, I just wouldn't be me. And I wouldn't know all that I know today. Or the people I associate with. Or have the relationship with my family I have just strengthened. I am I, for better or for worse. I've slept with some boys and many men. I have a drug problem. I am an addict of not only drugs, but also sex, and the social aspect of life. Everything that I have done, I have either put to rest, or am still struggling with. I am only 18 and I do look forward to the future but if I choose to continue my old ways of living I don't think I'll make it quite far, if anywhere, at all. I feel I have belittled myself and that doesn't settle well. It is a New Year, so I've chosen to reinvent my image, self as well as life, beyond the look or feel.

I am thankful for everyone that has helped me in the process of changing. There's always an easy way out. But how does that change anything? Why is it that the hardest things are the best answers? Maybe one-day not just life, but people in general will be content with what they have, who they are, and what they're all about enough to the point that life will and is worth the risks and downfalls accompanied with inhabiting.

CARLOS AMAYA

Calipatria State Prison
Calipatria, CA

The Hands Of Time

If I could turn back the hands of time, would I? If by doing so, I could change my current situation, if by doing so I would save my mom, spare my mom and sister and others all the sadness and tears, would I?

I don't know. It's hard to answer. By doing so my whole life would change. Yes, I wouldn't be here. Yes, others would be spared so much sorrow. But also I wouldn't meet my friends and homeboys (there is a difference). I would not experience all that I have. I would not have met the girl I came to love.

No matter how sad and hurt I and others are, I'm not sure if I could give up all that I've gone through. Am I being selfish? Am I being cold? Maybe, but those homeboys, those friends have all given me so many good memories. Yes, I've also had my share of sorrows. I've lost my freedom, my family's respect — I'm the one that's not talked about. I'll never be free again (at least not free out there), but all that I've gone through, all that I've seen and learned has helped my mask come off to show who I am and what I am made of.

I've come to believe that all that we go through doesn't shape us into who we become. Instead, all that we go through help the mask that we each wear come off a little bit at a time.

If we could turn back the hands of time, would we forget all that we each go through? Or would we be able to take back that knowledge and all those memories? It would be a big gamble, and to lose I think would be too much.

Yes, I know that in life the type of person I am, the lifestyle I live in is looked down on. But it's who I am. It's who we are. Everybody sees the violence and drugs and death. But we also have laughs; we are like a family to each other. There is something that keeps us in the lifestyle, right?

Everybody in life makes their own choices. We go and learn. We lose and we gain. We become who we are. Again we are looked down on by some, but also respected by others. Just like it happens in other lifestyles and with other people.

I sit in here "In my cell." I've done so far nine years, and I will do so for the rest of my life. Yes, I have my regrets. Who doesn't? But along with those regrets, I also have memories that just thinking about them make me smile. I've learned and I've grown just like we all do in this life.

In life, people get hurt, tears are shed. Things happen be it by chance or because of our choices...

"If you look too deeply into the abyss, the abyss will look into you." Friedrich Nietzsche said that.

I take it to mean we can't let all that goes wrong in life, all that hurts us, make us want to go back and change things. Make us want to turn back the hands of time.

We must learn to accept the consequences of our choices — to learn from them and move on. We can't look back and wish we could change our choices. We can't dwell and continue to look into our own abyss. We must move on and take off our mask a little bit more. Show who we are. Everybody makes mistakes. We all make our own choices. We each choose to live our own lifestyles.

That's life! That's how I see it. So..."If" I could turn back the hands of time would I?

I guess I wouldn't. — not because I'm selfish, not because I'm cold, but because "If" is a big word "If" to me is a form of regret. Like I said, I have my regrets — but the way I've lived my life, my friends, homeboys... those are not my regrets. Not many will agree with me. Some might think my view stupid. But this is who I am so far. Maybe as my mask comes off even more, as more of who I am, what I am made of, comes to light, my views will change. As I continue to grow and learn in life (like we all must do), my views and way of thinking might change. I'll find out. But not if I turn back the hands of time!

FRED SMITH

California State Prison
Paynes Creek, CA.

I Wouldn't Change A Thang

I wouldn't change a thang
I'll do it all over the same
There's no regret that's the way of the game
It's been a long road
Doin' it alone
Only God knows
What tomorrow holds as I look back on my lifetime and
lifestyle
The good times, the hard knocks
The run in with cops
The years away from the ones I love
Never thought how what I did effected them. It made it
rough
For my family to accept me for what I was
Momma's only little boy turned thug
Incarcerated sent away at a young age
Camp Shabo was supposed to change me and stop the
phase
But instead it made me bitter and hard inside
Mad at the word treated unfairly is what I cried
Where was my momma to come and get me? I'm watching
kids go home Trapped in this little cell man I felt all alone
Was it to teach me a lesson to learn how to appreciate
What I took for granted but all I did was hate
Now the seed is planted chokes away the innocent
Growing up too fast behind this cement
Bloody lips black eyes
Learn how to survive
After awhile it was nothing to do the time
Institutionalize, leave the world behind
Heart of stone straight cold. I think that's when I died
Buried my youth behind these bars and let the beast in
This is what it made and I'll do it all over again
(I wouldn't change I thang
I'll do it all over the same
There's not regrets 'cause that's the way of the game
It's been a lonely road
Doin' it alone
Only God knows
What tomorrow holds)

The years away from the ones I love
Never thought how what I did effected
them. It made it rough

For my family to accept me for what I was
Momma's only little boy turned thug

G. ALVARADO

Calipatria State Prison
Calipatria, CA

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Would I do it if I could, and if so, what would I change or not change and why?

These are not easy questions; nonetheless, I'm sure many of us have asked our selves this sometime during our lives.

As for me, I believe I am who I am because the journey I have taken since my birth. Everything that has happened throughout my 30 years on this planet had a lesson to teach me — some I admit took me quite sometime to learn. My present place of residency can testify that.

I don't believe in a predestined fate; I'm more in the belief of every action has a reaction. I am the author of my life and the owner of my dreams. Others may participate but ultimately "I am."

Some questions I often ask myself: who am I? Am I that monster the DA spoke about? Or am I the boy who grew up in total freedom to be who he was? Or am I the teenage boy who saw no other solution but to become a monster? What about the man who now inhabits my body ...is he the sum of all that I've been?

And did I have to put myself through all that pain and drag others along for the ride as well in order to be here? So — are there things I would change about my past — I guess the answer would be, yes and no.

I will change certain events of my past if I could, only if who I am at this time of my life was left intact. The man I am is more aware of who he is and what he's becoming.

The man I am is responsible for his faults — and seeks to make amends for his past actions — this man strives to make compassion the center drive of his life. He is not a claimer of any great truth... or to be the possessor of the philosopher stone. No — this man that I am has felt his own demons crushing his spirits, but as the great phoenix he is rising from the ashes of his own sins. Who am I?

Yes, I am those terrible things the DA so candidly described — but I am creation in progress — I am curious about life — I am still that wide eyed child who grew up surrounded by love and liberty amidst chaos...I am still he who felt in love at fourteen, and whose heart was broken a year later, not by a girl, but by the dissolution of a broken dream — a dream nurtured and cared since my mother exiled herself to a foreign land when I was barely one year and a half. For all those years I waited to be reunited with the one person who I thought I needed the most — but when the time came we both had outgrew our fantasy and expectations of one another.

I am still he who left all he had been taught to pursue... a path of destruction at 16. I am still he who found himself feeling all alone amidst a crowd of people declaring their love. I am still he who savagely pulled the trigger to kill another human being, but in reality wanted to turn that gun on himself, to kill the crushing sense of emptiness and loneliness that has invaded his soul.

I am still all those beings, for they have shown me what a man who lets himself being dragged along muddy waters can become — all those characters are still part of who I am — the only difference is that now, "I am aware." I control and manifest this understanding through my words and actions. I am no longer running around blindly.

This leaves no room for excuses. I cannot blame the environment, other people, or God. I know where I've been to, and know where I'm going. However I'd gladly sacrifice who I am — to take all the pain (back) my actions have caused to others. This probably sounds a bit contradictory to any opening lines but that's what happens when one starts tinkering with time.

I don't believe in a predestined fate; I'm more in the belief of every action has a reaction. I am the author of my life and the owner of my dreams. Others may participate but ultimately "I am"

JAMES HARDY

Marion Correctional Institution
Marion, North Carolina

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

If I could turn back the hands of time, I would. And this is why I would: Growing up in a cold hard world with no father and not much food to eat and letting the ways of the street be my father "and not listening at all, to my poor hard working mother," the streets was that man, I could feel like a man who would and could turn to at all times, day and night, when I cry the streets would hug me and make me stop crying and mold me into a man of the streets like a lot of men today.

At 10 years old, I was told this by my mother, "Get out or I'll call the police — I don't want you here no more 'cause I'm not going to let you mess these other kid's up in here." I hated the world after that, I had no father now, I had no mother now, so my grandma took me in 'cause nobody in my family wanted me. I ran wild on her but she stopped all that cold. I started going to church with her to ride a new bike my grandma had gave me. I was even tired of going to church I'll sleep in the back and one time I even pissed on myself while I was asleep. I was hit on the leg with a lot of power for a old lady. My grandma and I had to clean that chair after church.

Now I hated my grandma too, I stopped going to church, skipped school, lied to my grandma, touched girls on the butt at school and get kicked out, and I won't even tell her I'll sign her name on the paper. I don't know how I made it to high school. I guess God was with me. I didn't even do no homework in high school at all. Made the football team and I was in JROTC, I had no run ins with the police at all and guess what happened?

The streets called and I came running and running fast, I started lying and taking money from my job, bought a car and stole somebody's tags and put them on my car, running with guys my grandma said wasn't no good, having sex with all the girls and women I can, going to jail for getting pulled over by the police for driving, breaking in things, not listening to nothing my grandma had to say at all. Never sold drugs but I hanged with the guy's that did at all times, not even going to school at all, chased by my P.O. in school and jumping out a window in the classroom, broke in a police impound and stole my car back knocking down the front gate, lying to everybody in my family. Sometimes my grandmother would have tears in her eyes in court 'cause she took me in when nobody else would and this is how I do, I would turn back the hands of time and stop and listen — and listen good to my grandmother, mother, teachers and aunts.

Now since I been here both of my aunts have died of AIDS and I couldn't even go to pay my last respect to them, I'm still hurting 'cause of this, if I only have listened, but I chose to listen to the streets and this is what I got. I'm not dead and I have changed for the better — me. And I have no kids, so I still got a chance to make it right with myself and grandmother, mother, and family turning back the hands of time is all about listening to life; I might not win money, but it's not about money, it's about getting ones' self right and looking back and seeing where one messed up. I thank you The Beat Within for giving this country boy, down south boy a voice to speak with.

ALEX SHELTON Sent to us with an incredibly detailed piece of artwork, this introductory letter is something for the youngsters to read. Alex Shelton, who's a Beat first timer, is writing from Kern Valley State Prison and is expressing concern for the younger generation by giving his own experience with gangs. He also puts things in perspective by stating 'the gang banging is holding you in bondage.' He brings to surface the irony of being frustrated with incarceration only to, not only remain involved, but also glorify the very same lifestyle that brought upon bondage in the first place. He has matured and grown out of that way of thinking, which we're sure most of you will do eventually (unless you see yourself banging when you're eighty, or if you even see yourself living that long). And as he explains the grief he's suffered behind gang banging, he cries out to the rest of us to please reconsider before it's too late. An amazing artist and writer, we hope Alex will stay in touch.



Greetings

My name is Alex Shelton and my handle was "Lucky". I got sponsored into a prison gang at a very young age of (18). I was transferred to state prison in 1987 from Preston CYA (California Youth Authority) on a special transport with a few other knuckleheads. In prison, solid gang members keep the game tight. So I was schooled and learned of the gang's dos and don'ts and the whole structure of everything! And it's a deadly game in prison and there's always the possibility of being shot by the gun control c/o or getting stabbed by a rival... the true end result is life in prison or death.

But the real sad part is hurting the ones in your family who love you. As long as you're bangin', you will continue to get locked-up. It's trickery and deception. Satan is laughing at you 'cause he knows you're in his grasp doing his evil deeds. I say straight forward and, honest and correctly that I have seen homeboys die, get sentences to prison, and several of my relatives are doing life without possibility of parole. And a cousin also was killed. I am on my 6th prison term. I've been to Pelican Bay SHU (Security Housing Unit) and Corcoran SHU. I was a youngster once upon a time and I've realized as the years flew by I lost my aunts, uncles, sister, grandma, grandpa, my dad, and many friends as well as a cousin.

All I'm saying is take a look at your life — the gang banging is holding you in bondage, when you can have freedom out on the street with the ol' lady, kids, and enjoying spending time with moms, pops, loved ones, once we're gone, that's it, we only have one life to live!

I'm not putting you down if you are a banger. All I'm saying is that you can have a better life the way God intended for us — it took me all these years to finally wake up and smell the coffee! When we get locked up, where are the homies? They ain't sending us no letters or photos or money or packages right? We depend on our real family who sends us money and who love us. That's why we can ask family for things.

My mother and sister sent me a TV and radio etc... to make this time a lil' easier but those homeboys out on the street can't even write one letter to say hi. This is after the fact they put their "word" on that they would get at homeboys in prison. A lot of people drop-out of prison gangs cause of the bad luck- I got tired of being a "puppet on a sting" it aint no lifetime commitment and I seriously doubt that anyone will be bangin at 40 and 50 years old if they last that long. Stay up and do the right thing, keep the goals ahead of you and hold your head up like a king! "Strong will survive" push pull strive

I'm not putting you down if you are a banger.
All I'm saying is that you can have a better
life the way God intended for us — it took
me all these years to finally wake up and
smell the coffee!

Dear: The Beat

What's up? First, I would like to say thank you guys for givin' all of us incarcerated people a chance to express our feelings and thoughts; it really helps us release some stress that we might be holdin' inside.

Well, since I've been locked down I've been tryin' to write a little poetry and I thought that maybe you and other readers would like it. It helps me release my stress in a different way and I would like to encourage other writer to try it.

Well, I hope to hear from you guys soon. I will be waiting.

LIL' ROBERT AND LIL' RAY It's been said that two's better than one, so we're going to put that to the test. It's always nice to read poems from a poet that knows how to put words together with ease. So when we got two incredible poems from two different poets in the same envelope, we nearly jumped out of our seats. Well, maybe that's a little bit of an exaggeration, but you know what we mean. Anyhow, writing to us from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail), these two young stars who just happen to be cellies, both showcase their unbelievable talent for writing. Lil' Robert writes 'What's Up Beat?' and 'On Gossamer Wings' while Lil' Ray writes 'Dear: The Beat' and 'Well-Tempered Love'. Each poet has their own gift, yet both sound like they are dealing with matters of the heart as we all have. But they do it in a way that makes us sigh with amazement after reading the masterpieces they've created. You two can write as much as you like and we'll publish them as soon as we can. Thank you for your kind words. It's compassionate souls like yours that keep us doing what we're doing. You're the heart of The Beat, for without you the rest of us wouldn't get our nourishment.

One day you will be back up on your toes
hopefully doing and making the right choices
in life that you will need to carry on.

Well-Tempered Love

The fires of my loneliness
Once filled my life with much distress
And constantly they did suppress
My every chance at happiness.

In truth, I lost all zest for life
And every day was filled with strife,
Until, that is the day you came
Into my life and called my name.

With tenderness you gave me
The strength to set my spirit free,
And then you showed me lovingly,
How wonderful my life could be.

As our new friendship grew and grew,
A joyous feeling did ensue.
I know that I was born anew,
When I realized my love for you.

This love has bounds I cannot see
It is universal poetry,
And with its durability,
It shall continue endlessly.

So future trials will not repress
Life's tribulations will not suppress
This well-tempered love, which I possess
Forged in the fires of my loneliness

What's Up Beat?

First and foremost I wanna give my love and respect to all those who are locked down. All I got to say is just keep your heads up high and keep your faith in God high in your hearts and mind too. One day you will be back up on your toes hopefully doing and making the right choices in life that you will need to carry on. And there's no doubt that God will forgive you for your sins.

Me, I'm Lil' Robert from Livermore, CA, and my celly Lil' Ray from Niles, CA, give our love and respect to those locked down in county and prison. "Much love and stay strong! Why? 'Cause only the strong survive!"

On Gossamer Wings

When we first touched, my heart flew high
On Gossamer Wings through a cloudless sky.
People told me this love would die,
They said it was built upon a lie.

They told me my feelings would surely fade
Passions would cease and foes would be made.
To this I said, "Why are you so blind?"
"Can you not put the past behind?"

True love can change a rivers course,
Or pierce the strongest vault with ease.
True love can turn coal into gold
Or tame the tempest to a balmy breeze.

Quite sometime has passed since then;
People no longer criticize;
For now they see that truth exists,
Where once there might've been only lies

Thus my feelings are the same today,
As they were on that very first day;
For when we touch, my heart still flies,
On Gossamer wings through cloudless skies.

JAMES HARDY Also featured in our contest section, James Hardy gives us 'A Soldier's Story'. He's writing from Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina. And in his piece he speaks of how fighting with the mind is much more effective than fighting with the muscle. It's a great piece from a great writer to conclude our BWO section this week. Thanks to all and we'll be right back next week.

A Soldier's Story

Open your eyes take a look around. Do you like what you see? I didn't think so and crying don't change nothing so stop and learn. This is a war of self and understanding and making it out alive, it took me years to learn this and it's

no good unless I care to share this with my brothers and sisters in one war of self, we are on the bottom but we won't be forever trust that, what's underwater will float to the top one day and when that happens one's self has to be ready for it.

Fighting — that's cheap. If one has to than you must, but the power of your mind is stronger than fist, being able to fight with your mind is the key not your hands, you never see people in the F.B.I. or C.I.A or white house fighting do you, no, it's they mind they use to fight, so young soldiers learn to read and write and use this to pick yourself up cause nobody's going to do it but you, brothers and sisters, stay strong and hold on, thanks Beat Within.

GREEN EYES

At a very pivotal point in this young man's life, he writes down thoughts and feelings that he intelligently recognizes and can put labels on as a way to express them to the rest of us. We're sure most people have experienced heartache and can understand the pain involved in parting with someone you love. This is what this first time writer is going through. And as he writes to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, we find that though he struggles with certain parts of his own life, he still finds time to let the youngstas know that they don't want to be where he is. It's always more captivating hearing life lessons from someone who's learning these very same lessons as he's teaching them. We're glad he decided to write and hope this won't be the last time we hear from him. Let's give him a warm Beat welcome...

Dear The Beat

First of all, I want to say keep up the good work. I just got a peep of your magazine and thought it was cool. I'm an active gang member at the moment. I'm just doing a nine-month parole violation. I'm twenty six years old but started doing time since I was thirteen years old.

So to all you youngstas thinkin' all this shhh is firme you need to open up your eyes to see da light and go to school and do something conductive with your life. Don't you wanna be able to take a shower when you want? Eat when you want? Go outside when you want? I'm gonna be real with ya', this shhh is fo' suckas and punks, anyone who think dis shhh is cool.

Well, let me tell you what's cool. I got a fiancée out there. I'm about to go live in Kansas and go to their junior college getting an education is cool, helpin' yo' moms and dads out is cool. I'm from Stockton, CA. So, keep your priorities straight.

I'm gonna ask y'all one question. I want you to truly think about it before you answer it. How many of your 'so-called' homies have wrote you at least one letter? How many of your homies have sent you money? How many of your homies have came to visit you? I'll tell you how many; none, zero and if some of you have received letters I'll give you a percentage — two percent will get a letter from their homies, but the other ninety-eight percent ain't gettin' no mail. I'm gonna keep it gangsta, your so-called homies is probably hollerin' at your girl, shorty, yo' boo, your breezy — that goes for myself as well.

There was probably at least 25 of my homies tryin' to holla at my queen until she got tired of it and moved out to Kansas. So for all y'all gang members, gangstas, hustlas, pimps and wanna be playas open up your eyes before it's too late, I'm out.

Separate Ways

See, as I look at my life
I see us so far apart
How could I open up my heart
When I knew you would only tear it apart
So I think about all the
Good and bad times that we went through
But I really don't know what to do
Every time I'm doing other thangs
My mind keeps drifting back to you
As tears drop from my eyes
They're like raindrops falling from the heavenly skies
I'm in so much pain
Sometimes I wish I would just die
But I know God has something in store
And a better future for my life
So I stay focused
On the goals I have in my life
But my only wish would be to have you in my goals
So I can only hope and pray
That thangs work out for the best
As we both go our separate ways...
Dedicated to my only true love:
Jackie Lynn Rocha (Morris)

The Love I Still Give

My life is so confusing
I don't know what to do
It seems like everything I do
Just ain't good enough for you
Now all I do is sit here and think
About everything we've went through
The good and the bad,
I would protect you
In anyway I could
I would never let anyone disrespect you
If they did
I would find some type of way to inflict pain
Like a bullet into their head
Even if I went that far
Your feelings would all feel the same,
You take me for granted
Like I'll never leave
At this point of time
I'm at my lowest point
Having someone to love me
While I do this time in the joint
I longed for your soft, caring, words
The love you said you wouldn't stop giving
But where are you now?
You ain't nowhere around
You left me for dead
I hear your voice inside my head
It echoes out my name
Now that you've left me
It's drivin' me insane
At this very moment I don't want to live another day
Everyone think I'm normal
But I'm going crazy
After each and everyday
My heart feels like it's about to shatter
Into thousands of little pieces
I would bring the heavens to your feet
Or even give you the moon
I would unhook the stars
And give them to you as a necklace
Or a diamond ring
But now that you're gone
I'm in so much pain
As the teardrops
Fall from my eyes
They're like raindrops
That fall out of the sky
Even tho' they're silent
'Cause I don't want no one to think I'm weak
But these teardrops ain't for me
Still I give you
My soul and shattered heart
Is the love I still give you...
Dedicated to: Jackie Lynn Rocha

Don't you wanna be able to take a
shower when you want? Eat when you
want? Go outside when you want? I'm
gonna be real with ya', this shhh is fo'
suckas and punks, anyone who think dis
shhh is cool.

The Game Trapped Me

Take it for what it's worth
 The game trapped me from birth
 I came out of my momma's womb
 With time to presume
 That life was all about
 Gang bangin', dope slangin', hustlin' and killin'
 All I have done since birth
 Is cause pain to this earth
 Never playa hated, only stayed true to the game
 I'm from a place they call
 Stockton, California
 I was on the block slangin' rocks
 All of a sudden I heard non-stop
 Pops, all of a sudden my boy hit the
 Ground, blood coming from his
 Nose, ears, and mouth, my jigga died
 In my arms, I was hurt how
 Could the game take my best friend?
 I kicked my breezy to the curb
 Took my anger out on her but never
 Once placed a hand on her
 All my heart was seein' was black and dark.

I guess it was time
 'Cause the game sent me a wife who's been down for me
 And always spoke her mind.
 She's been down for me for 11 years —
 That's why the game brought me to tears,
 Took all that I had, but in the end, showed me love.
 Jackie Lynn Morris, I'll love you until the day that I die.
 You never once hesitated to ride like Bonnie and Clyde,
 You didn't give a damn what I did,
 It's still just a trip. Now I talk to kids
 About the game that I lived when all that in the game is a
 dead end.
 The game trapped me from the beggin', doin' dirt,
 Puttin' in work,
 But at the end the game got me talking to kids,
 So to all you youngstas who think the game is cool,
 Just remember this: you look like a fool.
 You ain't cool you need to be in school
 Now that's cool
 So get out of the fast lane aka the game
 Because it's only gonna end up in one place.

WILLIAM M. THURSTON III No

beating
 around the bush with this next writer — his creations are the ones you
 feel like you have to read a few times in case you missed something the
 time before. A true philosopher with the gift of communication is rare
 in our time of iPods and laptops. But you can literally see this great
 mind sprawling itself over this page in his first piece, a poem titled
 'The Perfectionist'. Then he concludes with a stellar short story that we
 believe symbolizes something only him and the person he dedicated it
 to can understand. But you never know... He writes to us from the Deuel
 Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. And hopefully he'll remain in the loop
 because he really has talent. Thank you for these amazing pieces...

Why Do We Write About Such Things?

They sat on the church steps just to the right of the "well-springs," (depending on which way you were coming or going) exchanging no words nor strategizing any next moves. It was as if they existed only to exist. Existing for those one particular moments in time when the only things that mattered really, were the trials and tribulations that brought them there, at that exact time and place, and the source that would bring a temporary relief to their troubles; engulfed in a stare of nothingness where the lives of others were wasted for reasons no one would ever come to understand.

He looked over at her as she stared into a dark void of her own personal nightmares from past experiences, and he felt a sudden pain in his heart, and he began to feel sorry for her, and also ashamed for contributing to her addictions. She seemed to have aged at least ten (10) years during the past 48 hours.

He finally came to realize that had he taken time out to have made such observations earlier on during the beginning of the relationship (if one could've called it that) he would've noticed it a whole lot sooner and could've made the appropriate changes and made some wise decisions as how to put an end to their madnesses.

But yesterday was gone and that particular day was coming to an end, and he hadn't the slightest idea where to take his friend or how to get her out of this mess.

The rain began to pour as they closed in to hold each other tight. They both shared the same dreams and the same passions. They felt the same emptiness and the same pains. It was as if they were connected in some warped way of being; at the very center of time and space. Together, yet, they were so very, very far apart.

Dedicated to and written for my friend Pamela.

The Perfectionist

Who are we but what we are?
 Bone and muscle.
 Blood and marrow.
 Abstracts of humanity.
 Products of our surroundings.
 Impressions.
 The results of parental hopes and expectations.

If we were not alienated, would we be free?
 Correcting instead of corrected?
 Policing instead of policed?
 Judging instead of judged?

Tell us now,
 How does it feel to have, once again, mastered
 The art of perfection?
 And how does the world seem
 From your pedestal high above the clouds?
 Are your eyes still focused on those you've known
 Since childhood?
 Your family.
 Your friends.

Do you remember "anything" about your past at all?
 Who you were?
 Where you come from?
 From the ashes.
 Amongst the dust.

Do you recall being, not once but,
 On several occasions where 'we' are today?
 In the bind.
 The rut.
 Difficult times.
 Poverty.
 The trials.
 The tribulations.
 Forgotten.

O' how we're quick to forget....

Or is it that we've intentionally
 Pushed our pasts away?

THEE MOUSEMAN

Though we'd rather see this wise man out here with us, it is always a pleasure to hear from him. Every time we open an envelope from 'Thee Mouseman', we know we're going to be in store for some very deep thoughts. And this time is no exception. He has the uncanny power to grasp us from as far away as Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, where he currently resides. In his latest package he dazzles us with a letter, poem, and, our personal favorite, a promotional advertisement for "The Game". In this advertisement he reveals how cold and ruthless "The Game" we all love to play can be. He intelligently mirrors the fact that "The Game" is one that wants you to play as it's obviously a promoting tactic to get you to play so it can eventually mess your life up. Great writing! His poem is just as innovative as he takes us through the mind of a "Little Buckeye Butterfly" who wishes 'life was simple and without care, all I ever wanted was a little sunshine and a little fresh air.' The metaphor is incredible. Sort of like his undying passion to teach the younger generation, which he makes evident in his letter to us. We're glad we didn't lose you. Next time try not to worry us like that.

Little Buckeye Butterfly

Hey, little buckeye butterfly, what brings you to my pen?
Haven't seen you since I was what, 'bout ten
Stay here awhile and remind me of way back then.

Yes, yes all too true, life was simple and without care,
All we ever wanted was a little sunshine and a little fresh air.
I recall chasing you all day, never getting mad when you got away.

Dancing in the garden running this way and that
Running 'till I fell with laughter on my back.
Were you sent here to bring this little boy home,
Or just to remind me that we are all alone?

I do not understand, all we ever wanted
Was a little sunshine and a little fresh air.
Somewhere along the way I failed to care.

I know, I know I have become a tangled weed,
I still want that sunshine and fresh air,
Perhaps to understand why I did fail to care.

What's that you say?
Sky father made flowers and weeds, some pretty and some quite glum.
But all with the ability to reach for a little sunshine and fresh air.

Little buckeye butterfly, what brings you to my yard.

Dear Beat Within

Hey there, thought you lost me, huh? Well, the state will not let that happen. I trust this letter finds you all in the best of spirits and finding the will and way to help the kids. As for me, I am not too thrilled with my new home, however as my pop's said, "If you do not like the service, next time pick a better hotel!"

Anywho, here is my situation as far as if you found what I said worthy of being published, I understand you print everything the kids say, and I really appreciate that, some times all we wanted as kids was to be HEARD! But being an adult I think you might be holding me to a higher standard, which is fine by me. Here is my ISSUE, I have not seen an issue since I wrote to you the first time, the guy who was sharing with me was transferred to another prison... I never wanted to ask for a subscription because I know that all costs money, however the situation has changed, 'er go — Can you please furnish me with a subscription and back copies? Please, I really cannot recall the date of when I last wrote, things have been rather hectic.

I am so curious as to if there was any response to what I said, oh that is another thing, all the copies of what I had to say were trashed in this place, that is just a side effect of prison. Could you furnish me with a copy of whatever I sent? Here is my donation for the cause. When I can I will send something else. It is just 12 stamps but I am sure it will help some place.

Don't go sending my stamps back either, I say it is the least I can do, and when time permits I will do more. I have had an address change, so please forward that to the postal section (across the room!) SMILE. I know all this may take a while and such as summer is here and we all are going on vacations! Me, well I am going to neglect my art for a few weeks and write!

I was told by a source that someone on your staff has a thing for butter flies, well here is an original Mouseman, I should hope they enjoy it, it is centered around an event that happened in San Quentin Prison years ago. Y'all take care and keep the struggle going.

Love and gratitude,

The Game

O.K. Gather around everyone, we are going the play "The Game"! Here are the rules. I am going to tell you what you cannot do. I am giving you notice ahead of time that if you get caught doing what I said you should not do, I shall take great pleasure in sending you to live in a tiny box with other players of "The Game".

Oh, and to make "The Game" more interesting, when you get to this little box, I will let you out for a little while almost everyday, but I am still going to tell you what to do and when to do it. Never fear, eventually I shall let you back out of the box. However, I shall also watch you like a hungry fat cat waiting for a mouse to see if you do what I told you not to do. In addition, to all this other new stuff you cannot do!

Do I have any takers so far? Does anyone want to play "The Game"?

NO, NO! Wait, there is more. As a bonus, I shall give you as many chances as you desire to fail, till you turn 18. You shall be given a small penalty, nothing too hard, nothing your young mind and bodies cannot handle. Then when you're hooked on whatever rule you like to break, I will give you three chances to fail "The Game". Then you shall actually spend the rest of your life on this earth in a box. Now!!!! I say again, does anyone want to play "The Game"?

WAIT!!!! Do not decide just yet — more information about "The Game". If you happen to break a rule on a day when I am not "feeling you", I will count that as an adult move in "The Game". Such a move shall be charged by those adult rules. How has your luck been running? Bad? Well, it has to change sometimes right? After all, today could be your lucky day. Please, won't you play "The Game"?

Come on now, everyone plays "The Game". Rich man, poor man, "The Game" welcomes all players. Allow me to introduce two players you might have heard of, first Mr. John Gotti, an up and coming Mobster worth millions of dollars. If ever there were a player suited and booted to win, it was Mr. Gotti. We shant make much of the fact that he died broke and penniless in prison; a loser of "The Game".

And Mouseman, a poor child, a common player. Now we cannot say he has actually lost in the game, he is still in the penalty phase of "The Game", currently serving his 10585th day in the tiny box! You on the other hand I can see you are special; I can see you are a born winner it is in your eyes!

Won't you come play "The Game."

Now, Now! Just because it might seem at first glance that the rules of "The Game" are designed for you to be a loser is no reason not to play! But if you decide to play, we, the inventors of "The Game", would appreciate it if you would not tell your homies, brothers, sisters, friends, and anyone else you may care about. That "The Game" is fixed. In fact, if you are willing to introduce it to anyone else, we the makers of "The Game" will allow you to be considered cool, and we all know how important it is to be seen as cool.

In order to show you (THE PLAYERS) our loyalty to you, we have already designed several T.V. shows that say without saying, that players of "The Game" are very, very cool, even though they obviously lose "The Game". Should you live long enough we "Makers of The Game" shall give you an "O.G. of The Game" title. This title is good for a lifetime to bullshhh your way out of sticky situations.

We have thought this out very carefully and will assist you in every way possible so that you might be a "Player of The Game". Thank you for playing "The Game", to date you are the best chance for being a winner, I can see it in your eyes. You will be a winner!

In order to join "The Game", no signatures is required, nor parental consent, simply gather your friends around and do something real stupid, if you do not get noticed, please do something stupider once more. And we, "The Makers of The Game" will search high and low to find you, our newest and brightest hope for "The Game....."

A Message To The Youth: Stop Hatin'

How many times have you told someone to stop "hatin'" or heard someone else utter these words? I picked the topic stop hatin' because it has become an epidemic in the African American community.

"Man you just hatin' 'cause I got more females than you, or you just hatin' 'cause I'm ballin'." Sound familiar? I bet it does. But what about all the hatin' that goes on when you tell one of your homies that he's whipped 'cause he want to stay home with his girl, instead of hanging on the block with you all night. Being a damn target for some other misguided little boy. Even worse is when you see brothas trying to get their education or trying to work for what they want and you tell them they're square.

What about all the times you tried to downgrade a brotha for trying to do something productive with his life? Like it's cool to be ignorant and stuck in a world of violence. Stop playing!! You know what? Those of you who look down on brothas who's trying to do the right thing, is the worst haters of all! Not only do you perpetuate the negative stereotypes that blacks are unintelligent, lazy, welfare recipients and drug dealers. But you also put pressure on your own people to conform to these stereotypes. Instead of encouraging them to get their education on, so they can help themselves, and us.

At the core of this self-defeating attitude is a negative self-image. The way we perceive ourselves, directly influences our choices. For example, if you see yourself as a gangsta, your choices will conform to what you think a gangsta is. You will pack heat, sell drugs, and commit violent acts. But that is not who you are. It's only a false image you have about yourself. If we are taught by our environment that we are nothing but drug dealers and if we don't have positive examples to tell us different, we will take on these negative qualities of self-hate.

Once we start believing this blatant lie, our God given gift of free will is effectively misdirected. Rather than using this precious gift to improve ourselves, we turned it against ourselves. Since we see our individual selves in this manner, we believe all blacks fit these images. To do otherwise is an act of treason and trying to be "white." Because a lot of us come from underdeveloped communities, where we have little experiences outside a 20-block radius. Our perception of ourselves and the world is limited. Don't allow your environment or the haters to limit your life. You can be whatever you choose to be.

When you see somebody hatin', trying to hold them down, pull his or her card. Ask them why they hate themselves so much that they want to see others living in misery like them. Don't hate, congratulate. Peace, love, struggle.

Keep It Together

Sometimes life feels like
A perpetual struggle, often
Times we become submerged
Bu these tidal waves of constant
Troubles, and frustrated by the
Foul takes of vulnerability, frightened
By the loss of peaceful security

These storms are like whirling
Tornados that kick us around
The battlefields of life, causes
Gloomy days and heart breakin' strife
But there is no avoiding trials and
Tribulations, they are designed to
Strengthen our determination to
Overcome the difficulties that we
Face and gives us the will to pursue
The dreams that we chase, every
Obstacle must be conquered by
Courage and faith, your reality is
Something that you make.
So keep it together.

JERMAINE SMOTHERS

The Beat Without section

is off the hook this week thanks to all the wonderfully prolific writers that have been showing us some love. It's a trip how many of you think we're doing you a favor. Don't you know that reading your pieces makes us grateful for life? It makes the ones that have gotten out to come work in our office remember how crucial it was to be there. It opens the eyes of the youngstas we see every week in our workshops. And for that we're thankful. Well, with all that said, you'll see how this first time writer will fit right in here at The Beat. He's got the three main ingredients needed to make a stellar BWO writer. Writing talent, interesting experiences, and last, but certainly not least, an undying compassion for those that are to come after him. With a very humble letter comes two poems and a heavy hitting essay. In the essay he twists the phrase, "Stop hatin'" to include when someone is trying to do something productive and he's labeled a square. That's hatin' too and we totally agree. So without further ado we bring to you this new knockout writer who writes from the California Correctional Institute in Tehachapi, CA. We think he's brilliant, tell us what you think...

Why

Why are we drawn to those things
Which destroys us? Why do our lives
Seem to be driven by greed and lust?
Why do we continuously disrespect
Ourselves by the choices that we make?
Why do we battle our humanity by
The lives that we take?
Why must we be mired in blindness?
Why is it that we do not show ourselves
Love and kindness?
Why don't we make it possible for
Our children to see peaceful days?
Why has our vision become blurred
To the point of losing our way?
Why does it seem that we hate ourselves?
Why do we continue to live in a
State of existence, equal to hell?
Why do we not care about our tomorrow?
Why don't we leave a legacy of
Progress, for our children to follow?
Why don't we gain knowledge and open our eyes?
Why do we act like we're afraid to rise?
Why?

Dear Beat Within

I just received my first Beat Within newsletter! Thank you, I thought you guys never received my request. Allow me to introduce myself.

My name is Jermaine Smothers, I'm a thirty year old African American man from Oceanside, California. I have been incarcerated for over 11 years for a murder that one of my ex-so-called homies did. I got life because I upheld the "code of the streets". At the time of my arrest, my son was only eight months old. Haven't seen him since. Now he's about to turn 12. I have been to some of California's most violent prisons — Pelican Bay, Calipatria, and Tehachapi. I have spent numerous times in "SHU's", (the hole). I have seen murders, been in riots, lost family member, etc. My point is that I think my many experiences will be insightful to your youth readers and writers.

Despite my many negative and self inflicting bad experiences, I have managed to educate myself and better understand the causes of my suffering. As my understanding started to deepen, I became inspired to write about my experiences, with the hope of saving lives. I have great compassion for life and want to do all I can to improve it as well as preserve it.

I think what you are doing is phenomenal! Giving these kids a voice is, in my opinion, one of the best ways to channel their energy towards positive outlets. When I read their work, I can relate to their many frustrations, emotions, concerns, hopes, and dreams. I was once in the juvenile system, abused and neglected. So I feel them!

I've been writing a series of essays titled "A message to the youth". I've enclosed one of them, plus a couple of my poems. Let me know if it's something you may be interested in? Take care.

Loyalty in struggle,

JEREMY TOWNER

We looked in our mailboxes and opened up some really outstanding news from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. It seems as though Jeremy Towner is writing a book and is going to publish it in our weekly. We're going to try and run a chapter a week, but if we can't get around to it, we'll definitely run it the following week. The beginning has us impatiently waiting for more because it's so suspenseful and riveting. Sounds like a book review, huh? Well, this is different from any normal book review because with this review you're actually analyzing his life. It's an autobiography. And from where we stand it's a very hard read because he's so good at bringing about these images in a way that puts you there with him. Which, at least in this first chapter, is not somewhere you want to be. Obviously a courageous individual for even attempting to put his life out there for the world to see, Jeremy has experienced some extremely harsh circumstances. Parts of his story even made us cringe. But like with anything genuinely beautiful, friction and opposition are what make it that. It's sad that so many of us have to witness and go through the kinds of things we do, just to come out the victors on the other side. We appreciate your courage and will continue running your story to show that appreciation. Thank you so much. You truly are one of a kind. We first met Jeremy when he was a youngsta in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall.

Con-flicted

Preface: Hello and good day to you. My name is Jeremy Towner and this is my life as it has been but for the briefest bit of discovery, trial, and error.

What you are about to read will shock most with utmost disgust to my existence and to others a spark of wonderment, whether for better or worse is up to the individual.

This is my story. Horrific in majority with struggle in my own morals and ethics as I grow into life with a will and desire to discover the world freely as it was in time's past. My pride and ignorance, with deception, my only companions on which to rely upon in times of survival and crucial decision making. As I walked a wide path into my future, my knowledge and understanding from experience growing evermore to a state of advancement.

However, I would later realize my advancement in certain aspects of my life would be a crucial piece to my ill foreseen future as seen by others who have tried to warn me of my own demise to freedom.

And so with my own realization that the life I've lived, however interesting and adventurous it may have seemed, has cost me the one dear gift of God to man since the days of our births and to never be recovered from forfeit for my actions. This is the true story of my criminal mind.

PS, Throughout this book will be some of my own poetry to dispel upon those who can relate or appreciate. I hope you will enjoy.

Conquer Your Fear

From individual perspective
Life is what we choose to see
Ignorance the blind fact
That we refuse life as it is meant to be
Denying our inner self
Leaving our souls alone to wonder
Ignoring inevitable actions of fate
We search for immorality ever stronger
With time of existence
Drawing ever closer to the end
Rippling waves of our fear
Not knowing what's around the bend
The one fear of the unknowable
Is feared even by the great
But it's up to the heroes
To take the path of fate
Accept it for what it is
Because on life you cannot depend
It will leave us all on a journey
For a beginning to the end.

Chapter 1 "Childhood" Our Beginnings

As a man writing this history I will honestly state that with my own remembrance of my earliest past I can only remember a few incidents and dreams come true. Mostly it is as I know a time of fear, anger, and loss of hope with a sinister deception of being led on to happier times.

Mostly a pack of lies to keep a dream on life support.

My earliest memory comes with a symbol, an idol that represented my fear and anger and is what gave birth to a part of my mind that this is what was to be expected.

Her name was Joyce and she was me, and my older sister's step-mother and babysitter. While our father went to work on the Air Force base in Okinawa, Japan. She would rule the house.

To me she was one to reckon with. To tip toe around so as to not disturb the aura of chaos that welled inside of her. Beaten almost every day and tortured by being taped to our beds at night with only a thin blanket to guard us from cold, it is what we were to expect and nothing more.

Days and nights sometimes would come with an empty stomach and lack of hydration and bathroom facilities would incite an instinct to survive by making the best of it all. Stashing food under our beds, peeing out a window or in our own radiator that never turned on. Sneaking water from the toilet because the sink would immediately incite the bubbling rage of our step-mother.

So along this beginning path of life I have learned the primal law of nature. The strong will survive. But it never separated the friendship between me and my sister. In fact, I feel that the only way we survived our dark age was by lifting each other up bit by bit so as to keep us afloat in our sea of hope. I think mainly because we were both in fear of being alone. Left to bear the full force of our demons by ourselves we knew that we could not win alone and we would cave in and lose our sense of better times to come. Then would our

lives be forfeit in early defeat.

But our struggle continued well into the distant future and with it we learned, we adapted and we became ingenious in our own way.

We moved about quite a lot due to our father's transfers so we had no time to settle in and make friends. But when we could, we made friends that would be remembered forever in my mind.

The worst days of my recollection were the times of severe harm that I had experienced. No friends to help or play with.

I remember a time when I was young when I was put in a coma for a couple days.

It started one afternoon, I was alone with my step-mom and she had just finished watching her soaps and was going to take a nap. She then put me in my room and then taped my door shut. It was only supposed to be for an hour and I figured I could handle it. Two and a half hours later, I started to get very thirsty and started planning a mission to alleviate my thirst. I knew that if I just opened the door the tape ripping off would wake her up. So I got my comb and went to the door and opened it up as far as I could. I then spit on the comb so it wouldn't stick to the tape and began to saw the tape off the door.

Once I got the tape off, without waking her up, I got one of my shoes to drink out of like a cup. I didn't have anything else in the room. So I then went to the bathroom and went to the toilet because our plumbing was too loud to run. There was already water in the bowl and so I dipped my shoe and drank away my parched throat.

Then the light came on and my heart nearly stopped. Like an animal caught in the headlights I froze and stared at my step-mom. I saw the belt she had and I immediately curled into a ball. That's when I started to feel the flesh stinging blows. Again and again and again. And when I thought she was done, I looked up and was smacked in the head with

the belt buckle causing my head to ring a little. Then she grabbed me and stripped me of my clothes and put me in the tub. Turning on the hot water, she then started to yell at me. Being doused in hot water I screamed but no one could hear me. On a reflex, I hit the cup in her hand and pushed her away. But she only came at me and knocked me cold out. I remember hitting my head in the back of the tub so hard I blacked out for a minute.

At that time my sister came home and saw what happened and told my step-mom to stop. She then ran into her room. My step mom then pulled me out and dried me off gave me some cookies to keep silent about it and took me out to the balcony so she could hang laundry. Next thing I knew three days later I'm in the hospital with a clown standing behind me while I was getting a cat scan. I screamed and flailed and yelled and was then grabbed and hugged by my father. If I wasn't humble by fear already, I would be now. So from that point on my sister was my only friend until we moved.

I remember a time when we were in Alaska, at Eilson Air Force Base, I met the very first friends I ever had. J.J and Jacob. Two of the most fun and trusting friends I ever knew. They awoke in me a different way of life. A life of magic and imagination, adventure and daring with joyous elation for our happiness. We would dare each other to accomplish ridiculous deeds to see how far each of us could, or would, dare to go. It was our initiation into bravery and manhood. We guided each other into finding ourselves through our advances of being the leader, or the strongest, or the smartest, and most of all, the most generous.

Through these years I started to discern in a weak way of what was right and what was wrong. I would look at my own past and present with rage and disgust and a longing for it to be changed on a whim. I felt like exploding with my knowing that what happened to me was and is wrong but also trapped because my elder peers were too ignorant to lend an understanding ear to a child who they think knows nothing.

So with my own decision made from being tired and losing my grip on caring I decided to take matters into my own hands.

That, I think was my turning point in the way I looked at life and led me to where I am today. But it saved my sister, and forever how brief a time it was, it saved my sanity.

I was late coming home one evening from my friend's home, which was only a hundred feet away. Coming home late was something I had never done and I knew that what was to come would be painful. But as fate would have it, from some part of my mind, I said enough.

It was not like me to take stand but to cower in a corner and expect what was coming.

So I walked into my home hoping to avoid a confrontation. The lights were out as I walked to the dining room but as I entered, the light was on and smoke from cigarettes choked the room.

With all of my own defiance and willpower I still could not keep away my fear.

She was sitting at the head of the table staring at me as a lion watches her prey. I knew then as solid fact that this would be a very bad night, but only if I let it happen. Then came the struggle of my thoughts, my decisions, the consequences of my actions should I choose to go through with my bravery and what I would receive anyways if I didn't. So I then thought to myself, "What have I to lose?"

I could not stand by while she continued to do what I knew was immoral and wrong. I could also not stand by while the same thing would happen to my sister.

All throughout our past my sister helped me. Stood up for me and took punishment for me. She would hide the worst things done to her I think in fear of being ashamed of truth. Truth is most bitter when it is tasted by those who know and to share its bitterness with the world is not something we wish to keep tasting. But it was happening and so I shared her bitterness never deceiving her trust because I knew what it was like.

With all of these emotions and memories of being let down and trained like an animal, to be treated like a disobedient pet by the ones who are to share life and its wisdom with us. By those who were before as children and learned how the world works. Who are supposed to

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

demonstrate not only how to live but how to feel and act.

Being betrayed by my own flesh and blood and angry at the world for letting it go on ignorance, because of their own cowardice, I exploded.

As she came at me I ran towards the kitchen, ignoring my surroundings, ignoring the coward in me and letting my rage take control, I went straight for the knife drawer and pulled out the biggest knife I could find and I turned my dragon, my demon and my hell. The one symbol of a life gone wrong, though I knew not how to live another, I just knew that one existed, and I faced her. I stood my ground crouched down low with the knife poised ready to strike. As soon as she saw me she froze. Surprised I suppose at the uncharacteristic move that I had made, she hesitated for a moment and then took a step forward. But I wouldn't let her come closer and so I warned her, "Touch me or my sister one more time and I'll stick you with this!"

This was not me. I was so surprised then at what I had done and said that I started to walk out of the kitchen without her following me and as soon as I left the dining room I ran. I ran as fast as I could go to a place of safety. My room.

I barricaded my door with my bed and turned out the light. I then sat on my bed, with the knife in my hand still, and I cried.

It was all I could do, I grieved for a life lost, I grieved for a life wanted, I grieved because my fear wouldn't let go. I kept thinking I was in trouble and that this moment is the end. This is the last stand right here in this room. And for what it might be worth I'll go fighting. To be continued...

The Incarcerated Are Powerless

We are at the mercy of our captors

Our spirits are restless

Our thoughts savage like a wild beast

Frustration fueling our provoked anger

Helpless at the loss of our freedom

Nothing but our thoughts to speak with

All the while time drips away

Insanity sets like a stain

Twisted screams in the night

Screams that communicate loss and want

Fueled by the hatred of our captors

Their provocation set upon fragile minds

Inventing their form of torture

Sick is the way they play

Cat and mouse is their game

Break us down to dust

To nothing

Crush any thought of flight away

Under the thumb of power hungry commoners

Kings in their dreams

But we are their experiment

Powerless we may be

But alive we still are

Our life they hesitate to take

They fear the unknowable as do we

And so they play with our minds

Only the strong will survive

A secret power they can't take

Will power

Yet while the will is ours

We are powerless at so great a foe

A feather fighting the wind

Is our lost cries

Powerless is a savage thing

Emotions — the captors of our minds.

LESTER LEWIS JR. What a great idea! Instead of getting lifted off of drugs, why not get lifted off The Beat? It sounds like Lester's doing that as he gives us a poem and two essays. In his poem, which is dedicated to his unborn daughter, you can clearly see that this young man has a very big heart. And what an obstacle to hurdle: your girl having an abortion without at least talking to you first. Well, hopefully Lester will keep his head held high and push on with the faith that he'll see his daughter one day. He writes to us from the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana. We recognize he's been through a lot, so we're looking forward to him 'getting lifted with The Beat.'

Embryo Doe

In a blink of the eye
The seed was planted inside
Upon finding out
The shock and joy, I couldn't hide—

I was to be daddy: your father
Before I even knew what you were
But it wasn't meant to be
All because of her—

Usually, development of you takes
Seven to eight weeks
Just knowing you were there
Caused me to become gratefully meek—

And then it happened
One month later, and you were gone
Killed by an instrument
As the work of the abortionist went wrong –

I was out of town visiting
Thinking everything was going well
Only to get back home
And find myself raising hell—

She took you away from me
Wouldn't even let me say goodbye
I was so damn hurt by this
Too angry to even cry—

Found out you were to be a girl
You called for help and I wasn't there
Baby girl, I didn't know
That your mother just didn't care—

You're in God's hand and in his care
To Heaven you had to go
I hope to see you when I get there
My sweet, baby Embryo Doe

Get Lifted With The Beat

What it do? Reading the stories and poetry in The Beat causes me to reflect upon a lot of similarity in my life and the environment in which I reside in.

Gangs are ever present in every state, city and providence and they not only deal with flashing the color, but of an affiliation; a way to be identified and recognized. Staying true to the homies is all right but it's staying true to self is what matters most. True.

The Beat enables each of us: young and old, rich and poor, strong and weak (mentally, not physically) to take a good hard and long look inside ourselves. Evaluated our situation, think on what landed us here, be able to take all of that pent-up stress and frustration, and put it all on paper, it's that time to let go, write about it, and in the end get lifted. You wanna drink? Get high? You don't need alcohol or a narcotic... just get lifted with The Beat

Introducing... LBL

What it do, Beat readers and writers? This is my first contribution to the BWO, so take some time to get to know me through this piece. I'm a 33-year young ninja confined behind the walls of the "belly of the beast" AKA Louisiana State Penitentiary. They know me as Chocolate because my moods reflect the many different brands of the candy.

I want to appeal to the younger cats confined in the halls, and wish to tell you that you don't realize how truly blessed you really are. I got a story to tell. Take a seat and lend me your ears...

My first time doing time was in family court detention center in Baton Rouge, GA. I did 6 months for forging checks. My PO was cool, though she hounded me. She cared about me, though I didn't see it like that. She used to take me to the mall and everything. I put moms through hell.

I get out of FCDC and eventually off probation. Always made A's and B's in school, never had a problem with schoolwork, though I talked back to my teachers, being a bad ass 'cause I was trying to fit in — didn't realize that I was dealing with tragedy from childhood. My only means was striking at the ones who cared most about me.

As I got older, I got more rebellious. Thinking that I needed a girl to slow me down, I started messing with this girl who had a crush on me. Infatuation led to lust, lust led to sex, sex led to her being pregnant. I was 16! I grew up in a family-oriented environment, so I was determined to do right by her. A month after being pregnant, she decided (without my consent or input) to have an abortion. I was out of town visiting family in Costa Mesa. When I returned home, she was in the hospital because the abortion procedure went wrong.

I went ballistic — doing all kinds of BS that eventually led me to kill another ninja. I often think of my aborted child. I found out I'd have had a baby girl. She'd have been 17 today.

What I'm getting at is this young ninjas: you have a chance to change your outlook. Change your way of thinking, of living, of reacting. I can't say I know where you've been 'cause I haven't experienced half of what you have. I can say that I know where you're going. Think about this.... Your moms could've aborted you or abandoned you. If you have a mom that loves you, it matters not that you're rich or poor. Think of what your being locked up is doing to her or even to your dad, to your family. You have a chance to do it right this time. If you don't, you'll end up in the pen doing real hard time or worse; in the grave for doing something or being stupid. I am Lester B. Lewis AKA Chocolate signing off. If the Beat so desires, I'll be back at cha all.

One Love

Think about this... Your moms could've aborted you or abandoned you. If you have a mom that loves you, it matters not that you're rich or poor. Think of what your being locked up is doing to her or even to your dad, to your family.

Happy 4th Of July — Freedom Day —

After seven years of incarceration on as 25 to life sentence has come to pass, I've discovered one thing: I'm a "free" man! I've been "free" since my birth in 1997. Many people fought and died for my freedom and continue to do so to this very day. But why? Who can really answer this loaded question? Why did unknown strangers fight for not only their freedom, but also those that lived in the future as well? America was conceived in 1776, right? At least our independence was. (1492) But why did it take another 87 years or so to "free" any and all "slaves" by a president who wasn't yet born in 1776?

History is exactly what it is — His-story! Everything before our time was supposedly documented by our predecessors. But there are skeptics and critics alike about how things actually transpired in the past. See, people of our time weren't alive way back then, so how can we be so sure of certain events taking place? Maybe we're meant to believe these things, who really knows? It's similar to someone being convicted in a court of law for a crime where there are no witnesses and only circumstantial evidence. This is where the prosecuting attorney rants and raves to a jury, trying to convince it of his/her own theory. But that's all it is: A theory, a story, whether it's true or not. It's his/her account as to the events that took place.

The point being, the prosecuting attorney doesn't actually know. He/she wasn't present at the time. (In a court of law, the attorney who "acts" the best wins. Whoever convinces the jury, truth or theory or lie, the best actor wins.) I close my eyes every single day, sometimes, it's for 6-8 hours, sometimes it's just a few hours at a time, and sometimes if I'm fortunate enough, I'll close my eyes for 12-16 hours. I have a phrase for when I close my eyes. All I'm doing, whether actually sleeping or awake, is "staring at my eyelids". This is my personal escape, my "freedom".

No matter what occurs throughout the day, when I close my eyes, it's a different story. I am "free". I'm entranced with my own thoughts, my own feelings, my own life, my own goals and dreams. Sometimes it's difficult to separate reality and fantasy but it is manageable. Sometimes when I sleep, I can control my dreams, not how my dream actually plays out; as I fall asleep at night, I can think of something specific,

GREG JOHNSON Though the Fourth of July passed already, the idea of freedom ring in our office annually. We guess it just comes with the territory. Another thing that comes with the territory at The Beat is having a BWO section with this next O.G. writer in it. A Beat just wouldn't be the same without the likes of writers like Greg Johnson. Always an inspiration, Greg uses the independence holiday as a way to segue into how he remains 'free' in his own life. And when we speak of freedom here at The Beat, we're usually talking about the freedoms that aren't tangible. We always enjoy hearing from Greg, so we'll keep him in our thoughts while awaiting more of his great words. If you don't already know, Greg writes to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Once upon a time he was a writer in our weekly workshops in SF/YGC.

an event or personal, and a dream will follow involving that specific something. And many times when I wake up, I can remember what my dream was occasionally, hours or days later, I'll go to sleep and my dream will continue where it left off. Now mind you, this doesn't happen all the time, but enough to know that I'm "free".

Not every time I close my eyes are pleasant. There are times when I have nightmares. Some are worse than others and at times I force myself awake because they're so bad. The nightmares began soon after my arrest so those who know me can imagine what the subject matter is. It's the same horrible nightmare and image every single time. But this too is a prime example that I'm "free".

I dream and think of my daughter often, she just turned thirteen, my baby, Melanie passed away many years ago but that doesn't prevent me from thinking of her constantly. The time with her may have been short but the memories are pleasant and they last a lifetime.

I dream of people from my past, Mimi, Cindy, Shanti, Samantha, Erica, Stephanie, Ray, Harry, Alicia, Ernestina, Felicia, Melissa and so many more, I dream of my brothers and sisters, proud that they've succeeded and have families and are all doing well. I dream of Denisha, Nicole, Tanya, I dream of being somebody, a success, when I stop dreaming, the nightmares begin. I dream of a life outside of incarceration, my thoughts, my dreams and fantasies, they all set me "free".

I'm grateful for those who fought and died for my "freedom". And then again, I've been banished from society, therefore, my opinions are insignificant.

Peace and respect,

STEVE-VOE Writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, Steven gives us a glimpse of his mind while in the SHU. We're sure anyone who's been on lock down can understand where he's coming from. And though the SHU is much more harsh than just any regular old lock up, we're sure the thoughts of the past and what we're going to do with ourselves in the future are the same. Sometimes we find the most beautiful things in the ugliest places. We're glad to have found Steve-Voe in one of the ugliest places in the country.

Many things did I put on paper,
In court, it became a scandalous caper.
The idea was to expose, misdirect,
and disrupt,
Little did I realize,
they too was corrupt.

Greetings From A Prison SHU

Here I am, all alone, without a view,
I'm angered, oppressed, and realize I'm through.
There is no reason to complain,
Had many chances, but didn't refrain.
Understanding not only my captors tactics,
How did I end up here with a revolutionary jacket?
Though I knew well of the game,
Not once did I think of my shame,
But only of a name and large fame.
Many things did I put on paper,
In court, it became a scandalous caper.
The idea was to expose, misdirect, and disrupt,
Little did I realize, they too was corrupt.
The authority is continually caholing,
It makes one ripe for ruling and exploiting.
A demand for order and changes in behavior,
They must believe their some kind of savior.
Thinking of terms of ethics and morals,
I can relate about these realistic horrors.
Whether its prison conformity,
Or social-political assimilation,
Every day I live this stark humiliation.
All along and without a view
Greetings from this prison SHU

JAKE Writing from Arizona State Prison in Florence, Arizona, Jacob McDade, speaks of his life in prison on the unit 'SMU1'. Serving a natural life sentence, he's had time to reflect on past actions as a way to make the future more clear. And we can't help but point out how much we like his style of writing. For not only is he an outstanding poet, but he also teaches without talking at us. He doesn't blatantly come out and say, "You need to do this, you need to do that." Instead he says, "This is what I did, and this is what I got." That way of teaching is tight because it lets the student decide what he or she wants to learn, rather than forcing a lesson on them. We like your style and can't wait to hear more...

Life At SMU1

Seems every morning when I open my eyes,
My surroundings set in, my first thought is, damn.
The night's dreams fade away, a never failing surprise
To wake up in this reality and realize where I am.
I sit and consider what I've done to myself,
To my child, my family, friends, and everyone else.
I've finally stopped wondering where I went wrong,
Because one day I realized I've know all along.
I shake my head clear to get into my routine
Telling myself constantly, "It's not as bad as it seems."
Yeah, try telling that to all the people I've hurt.
The victim's family and mine, along with everyone else that
I've burnt.
I was too careless and made a lot of dumb decisions,
Not seeing the path I chose could lead me straight to
prison.
A natural life sentence is what I have now
And sitting here looking back I'm still thinking "wow!"
Not the type of future I had planned for myself.
Then again I never made any plans, I just went along with
everyone else.
Yeah, I know now that that was really dumb
"Your friends today are you tomorrow"
They say that's who you'll become.
Who said that had it down right.
It runs through my mind before I go to sleep every night.
With all I've learned and know now about myself and this
life,
Too bad I can't go back and make everything right,
A natural life sentence to prison well just isn't any fun.
I sit and think 24/7 in my cell at SMU 1.

CALLLEN A very sad and heartfelt piece is what's next, so prepare yourselves. This writer's heart bleeds through his pencil as he obviously cares about this person a whole lot. It's to a point where he wishes to die because he's without her. Though we all know nothing is permanent, even feelings, it's hard to see it like that when we're the ones directly suffering. Hopefully he learns to move passed this obstacle as a way to focus on what he needs to do individually rather than focusing on the pain caused by being away. He's writing from Black Canyon School in Phoenix, Arizona.

The Love For You

I can see no more
Where did you go?
Why wont you come back?
What did I do to make you go away?
My best friend, my sister
A part of me I lost when in jail,
Now cannot be free for I can feel you no more,
I cannot see you.
Please come back I am not whole without you.
You make my life complete
You make my life worth living.
You make the world a better place for me
To know you're gone is like to know I'm dying
Is to know my heart is not whole.
It hurts so much to be without you
I wish I would die
Life is not life
It's too dark to be called life
It is death.

Yea girl, you trippin'!

On that stage up there stripping.

Knowing good and dog-on well,

That yo' body shouldn't be for sale.

Girl, where's yo' pride... yo' dignity?

Is this who yo' momma raised you to be?

A.D. Writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, this first time writer who's getting out in four months, writes something for the ladies. No, we don't mean one of those, "Hey girl, how yooooo doin'?" pieces. What we're talking about is one of those, "Girl, you trippin'" pieces — well, really it's a poem. Everyone can relate to this, especially nowadays where women are taught that less is sexy. Less clothes, less weight, etc. Well, what about you? Our young ladies are under too much pressure as it is. We shouldn't be perpetuating the stress by relating individual characteristics to beauty. We need to "Stop Trippin'" like A.D. said and love our women for who they are. And to the women, it's much easier to do that when you're loving yourselves.

Stop Trippin'

Girl, you trippin'!
Why you got that label on yo' fo'head?
You really mean to tell me you wish you was dead?
'Coz that's what I'ma think,
Seeing you dressed in all that hot pink.
Defiling yo' temple
Like it's simple
In this upheaval called life,
For the root of evil all night.
Shoulda never ditched that day of school.
Tryna be Miss Cool.
Have all the boys like you.
Doing whatever they say do.
Yea girl, you trippin'!
On that stage up there stripping.
Knowing good and dog-on well,
That yo' body shouldn't be for sale.
Girl, where's yo' pride... yo' dignity?
Is this who yo' momma raised you to be?
Sending you to school everyday,
To hook up with any boy who looks yo' way?
Working two jobs a week,
To make sure you got food to eat!
Girl, you just don't know how tough you trippin'.
Didn't you learn anything from yo' home girl Christine?
Tryna be like the video freaks,
Not knowin' that it's all just make-believe.
Doing her thang so that Mama don't see.
But what mama see now,
Aint no make-believe, child.
Seeing her on that table,
She tried to be strong but wasn't able.
Her baby look so sweet...
Only three days past sixteen.
She just had to have that Versace, the Prada, and the
Gucci.
So, girl, stop trippin'. Get yo' life on the right track
Yo' self-respect intact.
Get out that shack of bad association.
Take that label off yo' fo'head and finish getting yo'
education.
Don't worry about being cool.
Just make sure you stay in school.
Keep yo' eye simple.
Protect and respect yo' temple.
Stop trippin'!

DA' RU-ES Laughing is a tricky thing because sometimes it's used to share an amusing moment and at others it's used as a defensive mechanism for us not to deal with the 'sad' part of reality. This next writer captures both of these in his poem and does so with immaculate word play. Though it's obvious he still takes pride in being involved in a lifestyle that isn't totally beneficial, he benefits us by giving great insight on laughing matters. He writes from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA and if these are the thoughts going through his mind, then we can't wait to hear more.

Laughin' Matta

Laughin' matta?!
Jus' what's so funny?
Life is — you dummy
I live it to the fullest wit'out
A single worry
Inflictin' pain amongst many
Witness my fury
Happy seldom, funny all the time
A laughin' matta so effin' divine
I laughed to distract my tears and
Conceal the hurt
I laugh ev'rytime I put in work
Dirt, I've seen plenty of times
Beat to a bloody pulp butcha can't
Stop my shine
See me laughin' it's because you're a joke

I laugh in the face of fear
Even if it provokes
Death I take it and stride
Because if it was me I
Would wantcha to remember
The good times
I laugh at the prison guards (K-9's)
'Cause they think they tough
I laugh especially when they get touched
I laugh at these cats that be actin' gangsta'
I laugh because them fools be
Straight up prankstas
I laugh ev'ryday tho' I'm doin' time
I laugh at the women that say that they'll be by my side
I laugh at the sight of weakness
I laugh because the most hardest be snitches
I laugh during riots even though my life
Maybe in danga'
I laugh at myself 'cause to me I'm a stranga
I laugh to avoid heartache and emotional death
I laugh because laughing is all I have left
A laughin' matta life truly is
Especially when in jail to avoid the real biz
That you messed up and caused time to stop
That's why I keep myself laughing a lot...
Truthfully spoken

Its time to realize
There's no real prize
In committing senseless crimes

JIMMY TEAL We took a week off from publishing The Beat Within only to come back to an outstanding BWO section. The wise ones are stepping up, sort of in desperation, hoping to rescue our younger folks from the potential wrath of their own actions. How can anyone read through a whole Beat and not see it as something vital and priceless? We guess that those who have bad things to say about us aren't reading pieces like this one from Jimmy Teal, who's writing us from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. He, like most of our BWO writers, shows a general concern for those that may follow in his footsteps and showing that concern hits us with the harsh reality that sometimes we don't know the magnitude of our actions until it's too late. We advise people to take his advice before your life passes before your eyes and you're left wondering, 'What if I would've lived life differently?'

POETRÉ Writing from the Salem County Correctional Facility in Woodstown, New Jersey, Anthony Robinson aka Poetré speaks about addressing the things that have plagued him in the past and how releasing the way he feels about his 'own intense, adverse, tenacious curse' heals him. In his letter to us he says, 'Your newsletter serves as a good outlet to all of those that are restrained and confined, who need you to vent and express their feelings, hurt, grief, and joys through story tellings or poetry. I myself would love to share and contribute to your positivity but you must give me the information that I need in order to do so.' Just keep writing pieces like this and sending them in and we'll send you The Beats you're published in as soon as we can. If we're running behind, please be patient with us — we have limited staff for the amount of work that needs to get done, but we try our best. We appreciate the importance of your words and hope you'll continue to bless us with your creations. We're talking to the readers too.

Ease The Hurt

My words represent the perfect elocution,
Distinctively elucidating all present and past
confusion.
See we continue to try and teach,
But have a tendency to use acrimonious speech.
Why not try an' diversify some of your replies
Through the eyes of your correspondence,
And maybe they'll recognize your tranquil try's
As a form of eloquence.
Most would agree, that asking not harassing
Keeps personalities from clashing
And acting out in an ill-rational fashion
I try to eliminate my effusiveness
But yet I still deal with the ominous threats
And ever since I've chose to address
My own intense, adverse, tenacious curse
My diverse public announcements
Will continue to "ease the hurt."

In And Out Since Juvenile Hall

Youngstas, I feel you pain
For it's been 15 painful years
In and out of this prison maze,
Still a revolving door,
And I tell you I can't take it anymore...

Its time to realize
There's no real prize
In committing senseless crimes
Only except for wasting your life away
Doing time behind these prison bars,
It's a battlefield
Only leaving emotional scars...

Take control of your lives
Stop taking chances
Thinking you'll be a better criminal next time,
Because before you know it,
You'll be old and grey doing time behind these walls
Saying, "What a fool! I've been in and out since Juvenile Hall."

See we continue to try and teach,
~~But have a tendency to use acrimonious speech,~~
Why not try an' diversify some of your replies
Through the eyes of your correspondence,
And maybe they'll recognize your tranquil try's
As a form of eloquence.

...are there things I would change about my past — I guess the answer would be, yes and no.

I will change certain events of my past if I could, only if who I am at this time of my life was left intact. The man I am is more aware of who he is and what he's becoming.

check out the rest of G. Alvarado's contest entry piece on page 55

